



Said GUENNOUN

THE VOICE OF THE MOUNTS

Berber War Customs



Said GUENNOUN

THE VOICE OF THE MOUNTS

Amazigh War Customs

Translated by Mohamed Ouakrime

Publications de l'Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe

***Centre de la Traduction, de la Documentation, de l'Édition
et de la Communication***

Série : Traductions - 22

Titre	: The Voice of the Mounts
Auteur	: Saïd GUENNOUN
Traducteur	: Mohamed OUAKRIME
Éditeur	: Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe
Réalisation et suivi	: Centre de la Traduction, de la Documentation de l'Édition et de la Communication(CTDEC)
couverture	: Unité de l'Édition
Dépôt légal	: 2010 MO 3330
ISBN	: 9954-28-074-4
Imprimerie	: Imprimerie El Maârif Al Jadida - Rabat 2011
Copyrigh	: © IRCAM

Translator's Note

For purposes of accurate reading and pronunciation by the reader of the English version of the book, the following symbols have been used in transcribing some sounds, in conformity with the pronunciation of Tamazight (the Berber language) and Arabic.

Symbol	Original French transcription	Transcription adopted	Example
‘ (ain)	a / aa	‘	Djema’a
gh	gh	gh	Aghbala
sh	ch	sh	Ineshadhen
q (qaf)	k	q	suq
u	ou	u	mektub
w	ou	w	duwar
y	i	y	Ayt

CONTENTS

Preface	7
Foreword	9
Part One	17
Chapter I : An Intolerable Peace	19
Chapter II : The Alert	29
Chapter III : The Aggression	43
Chapter IV : Raho the Prisoner	49
Chapter V : Towards Freedom	55
Chapter VI : The Heart of the Matter	61
Chapter VII : Great Oaks from Little Acorns Grow	71
Part Two	75
Chapter VIII : The Reprisal	77
Chapter IX : After the Battle	85
Chapter X : Woe to the Vanquished	89
Chapter XI : The History of ‘Ali U Hussa	97
Chapter XII : Solidarity	105
Chapter XIII : An Emissary from the other side	113
Chapter XIV : El Hadj ‘Ali and Hamu U Melluk	129
Chapter XV : Perplexity	147
Chapter XVI : A Brave New World	155

Part Three	171
Chapter XVII : In the Name of Independence.....	173
Chapter XVIII : Great Hours	181
Chapter XIX : Mektoub.....	191
Chapter XX : The Terrible'Rumi	197
Chapter XXI : Observations on the Berbers in the Past and Today	207
Lexicon	214

Preface

Commandant Said Guennoun's new book is more than just a novel. It is a subtle and profound study of the Berber mentality in its relationship with the European civilization, which attests to its great interest.

The author's aim was to reveal the mystery of the mountain in an emotional and attractive way. He could achieve this only by inserting a little sentimental naivety in the rough setting to which we are introduced through his penetrating and discerning psychology. Let lovers of the world of wonders be reassured: the idyll depicted by the author has a shade of truth, and it is by all means true, if not lived. Thus, the Voice of the Mounts is profoundly human.

Following Captain Alain, the hero of the book, we enter a setting where the mountain man lives, thinks and acts, with all his qualities and weaknesses. We are witness to the skirmishes between two mentalities which oppose and feel each other. Force alone, would not have the last word, or at least would have it badly, had politics not come to its rescue, with all its means of persuasion. But, how could it be persuasive without knowledge of the Berber soul?

Commandant Said Guennoun was well qualified to talk about things he knew so well. Our comrades who have so passionately been interested in this country would proudly identify with Captain Alain. Together with him, they will be convinced that moral conquest which generates respect and trust, must prevail over any other conquest. It is through it that we will be able to establish the perennial nature of what France is doing here for the common good of two related people.

The story of a difficult pacification which is depicted by Commandant Guennoun is not fiction. It is the very story of a complex and generous undertaking whose progress must proceed under a sign of collaboration.

Rabat, February 1, 1934

L. Benazet

Director of Native Affairs

Foreword

*From very long, but nevertheless perceptible distances,
thanks to the limpidity of the atmosphere, there
appears a dimensionless and endless wall, a kind of
limit to a world: the snow covered Great Atlas. Beyond
Khenifra, it will still bar out spaces wider than mind
itself is able to measure*

René Valainde⁽¹⁾

Having read the books of Hardy, Leblay, Laoust, Odinet and Abbes, to cite but the most important writers on Morocco, it seems that everything has been said about the Berbers. It is, therefore, with qualms that one would indulge in addressing the issue at hand. The qualm is even greater when, as in the present case, one is able to serve one's prose only with a pen that is utterly untested but rich with good will. However, my readers have demonstrated so much forbearance that I have been unable to resist the temptation of presenting this modest contribution to the study of the psychology of the Berbers. May this aim, which is as it has always been, to underline the reasons for which the French and the Natives can and must be friends, serve as an apology for all the imperfections contained in this account.

The area concerned here is already well-known to our readers, for in addition to all the works that have been devoted to it by eminent writers, I myself have extensively described it in *La Montagne Berbère (The Berber Mountain)*⁽²⁾. It will, therefore, be easy for the reader to use this book as a reference which provides information about the organization and emotions of the Ait Umalu tribes likely to shed light on the nature of the events dealt with in the present account.

(1) *Le Maroc sous les ordres de Lyautey* 1924 Peyronnet et Cie, Eds, Paris

(2) Editions du Comité de l'Afrique Française, 21, Rue Cassette, Paris (1st edition) Editions Omnia, Rabat (2nd edition)

The Um Er Rebi' area is undeniably one of the most beautiful regions in the world. Life there is so sweet and enthralling that each of its inhabitants, when the mood is on him, is a poet, and that even Europeans, who are the most indifferent to matters relating to nature, depart from it only when compelled and with regret. Poetry is in the majesty of the mountains and splendor of the forests. It is in the purling of springs and in the impetuous hubbub of torrents. Poetry is particularly in the songs of the little shepherds, in the eyes of women, in the pride of warriors; it is even in the eventful but bitter past which is transmitted to us by the minstrels and troubadours, and where barbarism itself takes on a pleasant appearance.

Obviously, this Berber land is totally unknown to pressed observers with no time to spare. It is even ignored by many of our old Moroccans who are interested only in the burnous that their daily companions wear, and in their most marked defects.

On the other hand, those who have condescended to listen to the improvised songs of Zayan bands, or to the sweet and naive plaintive ballads of goatherds of the Seru or of the Aqissari Rivers which provide so much delight to Mr. Pierre Mille, will not deny the mountain men a bit of this soul and sensibility which characterize the most sociable people.

Anyway, it was while thinking about the Ait Umalu that Dr. Chatinières, a staunch opponent of simplistic clichés, wrote that when in contact with the Berbers, one feels a sensation of freshness, naturalness and spontaneity which constitute an act of endearment to our souls of civilized people.

However, what makes the Berbers, the subject of this book, even more moving is the care-free demeanor in which they take delight, in a social state which, to say the least, is one that compels them to always live with their weapons in their hands.

Would this be a sign of inability to conceive of another way of life? Or is it an invincible attachment to everything that is dear to their ancestors? One is not sure. Perhaps this is a sheer laziness of the spirit which makes individuals decide to live from day to day, not worrying about an already dead past, nor about a future which belongs to no one. However that may be, it is among the sheep and the goats which they drive from one pasture to the next, just as happened in the beginnings of their history, that their existence unfolds. They have, obviously, set up permanent water points and cultivation plots, but straw sheds, caves dug in hill sides or mud fortresses have been constructed only to

serve as storehouses or operation bases in case of war, and to shelter the disabled and the old in normal times. The rest of the population, that is its sound and solid part, live under the fragile black tent, which always moves at its owner's whim, and from which it is so easy to vault on one's horse when time has come to go to war.

As to the social organization, it has kept intact the patriarchal pattern that it has always followed. The tribe is the social unit, that is a group of direct or collateral branches of a single family, whose members bear the same name which is that of the common ancestor. They have the same family origin and enjoy complete equality.

The rights of each individual and the relationship between a tribe and the neighboring tribes are established by traditional customs which are transmitted from one generation to the next. The elders' Council, the Djema'a, where all branches of the tribe are represented, enforce the observance of the customs. A member of the Council, the amghar, is elected under the same conditions to assume responsibility for the preparation for war and lead the warriors of the tribe in the battle.

Thus, nothing in the life conditions of the Berbers has undergone any notable change for centuries, hardly has the establishment of landed property and the care needed for crops reduced the area of shifting of duwar boundaries and mobility of flocks, and marked a stage towards more sedentarism, thus changing the semi-nomadism of old times into a simple seasonal movement of flocks to and from the mountains.

Still, whatever its causes may be, the persistence of a primitive mode of life characterized by such rudimentary organization does in fact exert a disastrous influence on the political life of the country. The obsession with pasture concerns is such that the resources available are so restricted that selfishness and individualism reign supreme, and that life is an ongoing struggle for the possession of the best pastureland. In these conditions, man is born in an environment of war where he grows up and dies, and nothing counts but what will guarantee the acquisition of personal material benefits.

At an age in life when the European child thinks only about his hoop and his books, when the urban Arab child is preoccupied only with finishing his Quranic studies, the Berber child's preoccupation is only with his elders' heroic deeds which he dreams of outdoing. If ever he is left at home or under the tent

when the men rush to meet the enemy, while the women's shrill bibiou⁽¹⁾ and youyou's⁽²⁾ exalt everybody's mind, he feels ashamed as though he has suffered the worst kind of offence.

When he reaches manhood, his immediate and only dream is to be among those whose rifle is dreaded and whose fighting virtues are sung with praise by poets from his tribe and from elsewhere.

He is not prompted by any kind of national feeling, nor does he have any notion of general politics, nor any idea of territorial motherland. The notables who preside over the destiny of his tribe, and whom he could look upon as his chiefs, are in fact no more than ringleaders whose influence he submits to.

Religion itself stirs up his enthusiasm only in so far as he hopes to derive from it what Maurice Leblay calls mystical comfort.

On the other hand, he is passionately fond of his freedom and, he demonstrates so much defiance of death that the least constraint on this freedom is enough to put him beside himself and unleash the most violent of his instincts.

This fighting instinct is even so developed that any excuse is good enough that will allow him to satisfy it, so much so that war for him has become a normal state, broken only by short intervals. This, in fact, is the real explanation for a state that is so close to anarchy, with vaguely democratic appearances, and with a few traits of real nobility that hardly disguises an underlying of barbaric tendencies.

This is also the cause of the complexity and deplorable incoherence of the military history of the tribes or clans which take form and disintegrate with disconcerting ease, and where fights follow one another in an indescribable confusion.

This is a situation where groups which were allied one day will exterminate each other for any excuse, sometimes because of children's squabbles or because of a few liters of irrigation water diverted from their destination.

Robbery under arms itself is a way of breaking the monotony of the lull of war that has been elevated to one of the most honorable and glorious institutions.

(1) Alarm calls used by the Berbers to summon each other to take up arms to repel an attack by the enemy

(2) Shouts used by women to urge and exalt warriors at war.

However, the threat of foreign domination sometimes manages to defeat, at least for some time, this immoderate taste for anarchy. As George Hardy says: it is then that we have a general uprising of the tribes, a gathering of all the forces, a rapidly established community of feelings of violence and heroism.⁽¹⁾

No national army in the European sense of the term is set up, but, in the district where danger is looming, all energies stick together to resist the invaders. Duwars, which used to move about at random, as shepherds wished and from one pasture to another, get closer, marking the potential line for future battles with their dark masses. Djema'as hold more frequent meetings, elaborating campaign plans, electing chiefs and distributing tasks and resources.

Holy men, when available, declare that religion is in danger and put out the holy banners. Poets and troubadours take their drums and lift general exaltation to its heights. Women and children themselves prepare to contribute to victory through encouraging the warriors in battle and keeping herds for able-bodied men likely to bear arms.

When the great day comes, the whole country witnesses an unparalleled fever in all duwars and all centers of resistance.

Then, notes Maurice le Glay, terror hovers above the mountains; but this terror is not in the hearts. What gets hold of the Berbers is a strange and fierce frenzy, an exacerbated mixture of all the feelings of a proud and so far untamed people, resulting from the sufferings caused by defeat and obsession with servitude. The young, the women and the warriors have been for months now driven from one ravine to another, from one pass to another, and from one ridge to the next, knowing that there is nothing ahead for them but death if they stop, that death awaits them when they reach the point beyond the last pass or the last ridge, coming face to face with the desert where there is nothing to eat. Men, women and warriors are all exalted to play with death.⁽²⁾...

One could invincibly see in this eager resistance the heroic exploit of a people who will not let themselves be absorbed. Here one would readily be inclined to call to mind national uprisings that European people regard as the most glorious pages of their history. As a matter of fact, the national ideal is

(1) L'âme marocaine d'après la littérature française Librairie Larose, Paris

(2) Maurice Le Glay dans l'âme marocaine d'après la littérature française by G. Hardy

completely absent from these reconciliations among tribes, for here again it is the eagerness for independence which temporarily urges them to wage war in order to keep foreigners away. It is this passion for freedom, a principle on which the history and politics of the Berbers are based, which defers to better days the satisfaction of individual egoisms.⁽¹⁾...a freedom, however painful, which must exert a tremendous attraction, for a great number of men daily draw from it the strength to fight and die rather than submit to the enemy.⁽²⁾

We may, therefore, easily conceive of the extent of difficulty that our pacification campaigns are up against in the Ait Umalu area. On the one hand, are the extremely rough mountains exposed to continuous climatic changes, and accessible only with difficulty to our conspicuously overloaded columns. On the other hand, we have particularly warlike tribes, fiercely hostile, intent on defending themselves and heavily influenced by their miracle makers posing as defenders of Islam, a religion that was not threatened in any way. This was an alliance between man and nature, drawing its strength from prejudices and errors accumulated over centuries.

Still, not only had these difficulties been overcome, but our war actions, even the bloodiest, have engendered so little hatred that once arms had been laid down, the French and Berbers, as did the French and the Arabs in other countries, have miraculously found themselves united by the strongest of friendships as though they had never fought against each other. Today, it is our opponents of yesterday who form the advanced guard of our columns, marching towards the peaks of the Atlas.

One may ponder on how these results have been achieved. As Commandant M. Surdon wondered during a lecture at the Popular University of Casablanca

How have we managed to achieve the unity of Morocco, giving the Sherifian Empire peace and unity all over its territory, before we embarked on an enterprise to which both the French and the Moroccans must be closely associated so that the concept of collaboration takes on its high and enlightened meaning ?

Better qualified people than myself have said this in more appropriate words and, thanks to them we have come to realize the great humanitarian

(1) L'âme marocaine d'après la littérature française by George Hardy, Librairie Larose, Paris

(2) Maurice Le Glay dans l'âme marocaine d'après la littérature française by G. Hardy

concern with which Marshall Lyautey and General Huré planned and brought to a successful end the military pacification enterprise.

However, what is not so well known about this enterprise is the obscure, humble and lengthy task that was accomplished in the stillness of the Berber nights, sometimes at the thud of canons and machine guns, in order to avoid or stop bloodsheds. I believe it a duty to underline in the present account this work that carries the seeds of a future fraternity, with all the independence of mind that the impending end of my career allows.

May our French countrymen, Arabs and Berbers, find in this past of war, which was glorious for all, still new reasons for us to hold each other in high esteem and love.

S.G



Part One

Chapter I : An Intolerable Peace

We were in April, and spring in the Ishqern country is gorgeous. Life, which had been numbed for four months by a severe winter was just rising from its torpor and starting up again with renewed vigor.

Snow, which was an enemy to people without shelter and to starved flocks, had gone quickly, leaving behind only thin whitish trails which the high peaks insisted on keeping as ornament, like ephemeral stoats.

A few steep cliffs also still covered wide striped and wrinkled patches where young goatherds clad in rags came to gambol in the middle of the light-footed kids. However, even these patches disappeared gradually, leaving the Middle Atlas summits to the dark grey color of their rocks.

You could, again, see on the broken slopes, twisting and abrupt footpaths which lead from the Seru⁽¹⁾ to the Muluya, and from the gorgeous forest to the barren steppe.

The Tizi Ngheshu pass itself had cast off its winter mantle and opened to the insurgents of Kerushen, who had up to then been blocked in their deep funnel under the threat of a French advance, their favorite way to what they called the country of freedom

Spring... Thifsa. He who does not know anything about the intimate life of the Berbers cannot imagine what such a word and such a thing represent in terms of relief, happiness and hope for the imghughen (unsubdued and dissidents) of the mountain.

They have up to now lived in uninterrupted agonies, under the repeated strikes of devastating snow storms which have carried away old men, babies, lambs, kids, etc...

They have had to expose themselves to razzias⁽²⁾ by the enemy in order to save part of their flocks which had been threatened of total destruction by the absence of pastures and the severe cold in the mountain. They have been

(1) A river

(2) Raids

compelled to be on constant alert, with their luggage packed every night, often without illusion about their fate in case of a serious attack by the enemy.

Then, the sun comes back to put an end to all their ills and anguish. Under its blazing beams, a *gandurah*⁽¹⁾, however thin, is enough to both man and child. Grass grows again everywhere on the stepped hills of the Dir, and *duwars* are no more compelled to remain in the dangerous plain or in its immediate vicinity. Footpaths leading to safe shelters become at last passable to big caravans and provide families, flocks and tents with the guarantee that the enemy will not in any way be able to reach them.

They can even afford to become aggressive, for the Berber man who can cast his fear likes to convince himself and demonstrate to others that the bad days are gone and that his recovered strength must henceforth be reckoned with.

As a matter of fact, the *Ishqern* who had been spared by the French Cavalry that same year during the winter thanks to their clever politics, had made the decision that instead of moving back to the mountain when the weather is fine again, the *duwars*⁽²⁾ would remain at the foot of the first foothills to benefit as much as possible from the rich pastures of Beni Khelil, Tighessalin, Sidi Bu ‘Anan and Lenda.

Thus, and following the agreement that had been reached one evening when a chosen dozen notables had met by chance under a mourning tent, there was a considerable number of *duwars* all along the Dir whose quietude was so great that the most elementary security precautions had been totally neglected.

The Ait Ya’qub U ‘Ayssa tribe had even proved daring or careless enough to maintain some of their fractions at the foot of the slopes of the northern side of the Djebel Buyghsayen, within reach of the canons of the posts of Ait Ishaq and Tajemmu’t, without causing the least reaction on the part of our own military works. In this way, it was impossible for the most experienced of observers to notice the least sign of war in the country. On the contrary, everything breathed peace and the joy of life.

Nature itself had become generous and provided a variety of resources to all. In the plain, wide fields of barley and wheat had started turning yellow, promising abundant crops. The heavy ears of grain, strewed with red poppies,

(1) Long-sleeved large garment, made of thin or coarse material

(2) Tents organized in a circle

gently undulated under a light breeze, in deep and golden waves where noisy lines of weeders sank and reappeared incessantly.

Close to the springs and along the brooks where water flowed in crystalline babblings, big flocks satiated from dawn, displayed their wild and grayish masses. At the same time, male and female shepherds, momentarily freed from their worries, chased each other among the flowering lilies, holding their cudgels high and childishly menacing. Their shouts and laughter filled the air up to the moment when, out of breath and exhausted, they fell at the foot of big ball-shaped bushes and there, spread against each other, with their little hands knotted and their eyes staring vacantly, as they told each other their child dreams or started early romances.

In the depth of every valley, behind each ridge propitious for defense, light fumes revealed the presence of tents and huts where women chattered around tea trays, indifferent to the cries of the children. The other women benefited from their share of the sun, setting up heavy looms and with courage, resuming their interrupted work outside their shelters.

Here and there, little boys already divided into leffs⁽¹⁾, rode long sticks and played war games among the fat sleepy dogs, proudly brandishing their light reed rifles. Further away, dominating the litany of crickets, the sweet singsongs of boys and girls confided to the clear sky their praise of the most beautiful woman and the bravest man in the duwar.

Everything yielded to the joy and beauty of life in the blossoming plain.

At the same time, however, the footpath leading to El Qebab swarmed with hurried horsemen and pedestrians. The village, itself already overwhelmed with an incessantly growing multitude, had put on the appearance of great political days. People jostled each other in the market, they crashed each other in the narrow streets, among the yapping of public criers. Each spring in the village had its own crowd, just like each of the enormous golden aspens of the neighborhood which had been, by miracle, spared by the hatchet. People kept arriving from all parts of the country, in noisy and picturesque groups which could be identified from far away on the ridges. There were the Ishqern, the Ait Ishaq, the Ait Ihand, the Zayan of the northern bank of the Seru, as well as the Ait M'Gild of the Muluya, the Ait Yahya of Tunfit and the Ait Sukhman

(1) Political party, clan.

of Aghbala. Even the Ait Hdiddu from beyond Al ‘Ayachi where, it was said, the *Imazighen*⁽¹⁾ feared nobody but God, were there.

And all these people, who not long ago fought the fiercest battles against each other for trivialities, did not seem to be surprised in any way at meeting together around peaceful tea pots and making meshwi⁽²⁾. It was as though a stroke of the pen had erased all the troubled past, the most important now was their brotherhood and alliance. People approached each other affectionately, with laughing eyes, even among strangers. Hands were earnestly held out to opponents, without ulterior hard feelings, and even blood debts were completely forgotten, as though a mysterious order had imposed a truce to all grudges and hatreds!

The implicit order had in fact been given, but of course not in an imperative way, for nobody commands the free mountain men. However, a number of messengers from Ishqern had traveled throughout the tribes for the whole week, and in their own clever way had managed to thrill the souls.

Our Djema’a⁽³⁾ calls upon you oh brothers and you most certainly will answer the call. The ‘rumi’⁽⁴⁾ is weakening and shaking. We have managed to deceive him all through the winter, our duwars are under the foot of his walls, our flocks cross the lines of his positions and, still, he does not dare move. His canon is constantly still and his planes do not dare appear in the sky anymore. Now is the time for the freedom of Imazighen. Come let’s make decisions. Come to the booty. On Thursday, the footpaths of our territory and our market will become sacred for the whole nation of Islam...

The Berbers could not remain indifferent to such a call that was substantiated with irrefutable *thimithar*⁽⁵⁾ and clever and pressing exaltations. Their honor was at stake, for in the Dir, as in all parts of Berberland, fighting against the invading foreigner is the first of all duties. Although the rumi was still far away from some of the tribes that had been called upon to join in, he was an enemy for the whole mountain since after he had conquered the Arab plain, he had dared attack the Ait Umalu country and had already occupied a number of very important positions. Besides, in the case at hand, what was at

(1) The Berbers

(2) Whole or part of a roasted sheep or goat.

(3) Council of notables

(4) The European, the Christian

(5) Passwords

stake was how to precipitate his defeat with the help of all Imazighen, which left room for no hesitation whatsoever.

Therefore, the messengers had been warmly welcomed, they had been treated with the utmost respect and people had been carried away by their wonderful promises. Then, such promises had been spread everywhere, and amplified beyond measure by popular imagination.

Meetings had been held in every duwar beside holy sanctuaries which constituted essential witnesses to all important events.

The war budget, which was made up mainly of the *mosque property* (*el mal n djema'ŕ*) had been meticulously examined by every group, section by section, under the watchful control of the notables.

Some aging warlords had been discretely made to understand that it was time for them to retire and give up their position, given the urgency of the circumstances.

Then, over the whole inflamed mountain, the inshadhen⁽¹⁾, taking up their favorite theme again, had praised the virtues of the Berber race, glorifying courage and cursing cowardliness.

It was in this way that the Ishqern capital, a great center for intrigues since our troops had occupied Khenifra, had been invaded that day by all the notables and warriors of the country. These latter had become indifferent to the beauty of the day, or else, they were so excited by that same beauty, that they indulged in talk about ambushes, lootings, battles, death, etc...

The salesmen were delighted at this godsend: their shoddy goods sold so well, particularly the brightly colored *caftans*⁽²⁾ which people were eager to wear later on with the aim of dazzling the opponents and imposing consideration among fellow tribesmen.

The Djema'a rejoiced at the thought of being able to play so important a role before noblemen from other tribes and organizing free feasting.

The overexcited crowd was elated by the illusion of power produced by this imposing gathering, so much so that people had already started whispering

(1) Bards

(2) Woolen cloth wide garment, with sleeves

that if the mountain would only unite, the French positions will be *eaten up*⁽¹⁾ *within a day*.

A jester was very successful indeed, but he almost lost his life under the whacks of those he was trying to amuse. Perched on a camel which had been coated with dirt, he was clad in a squalid greatcoat and wore a peaked cup on his head, both objects being innocent remains of a sad encounter in which some of our own men had been left dead, he pretended to be the Qabtan (*Captain*) of Khenifra and made a show of crushing everybody.

Get out of the way, you dogs, don't you know who I am ? And you Qaid⁽²⁾, *why aren't you on the track keeping an eye on the workers? You will be deprived of food for four days and you will empty the toilets of the Senegalese. And you, Amahroq*⁽³⁾, *have you decided not to work just because your father was amghar*⁽⁴⁾ *of Ait Umalu ? How can you be so cheeky? Walk before me, quickly, you filthy Berber!*

The cheered up crowd had started taking the Christian seriously and they made room all around him. Moreover, he flourished a bludgeon above their heads, whose swift movement often failed to stop on time. His panic-stricken camel, made wild by the noise and people's shouts, frightened the most daring among them. However, people in the crowd quickly managed to recover their self-control and now, there was talk about carrying the joke further and having some practice. They fetched reed sticks and stones and determinedly surrounded the enemy to get him to stop the show.

Then, the camel, which was eventually overcome, fell at full length in the middle of the groups, delivering its rider to those who were intent on killing him.

The Qaid who had incurred the jester's insult spoke of killing the infidel forthwith. The friends of the man he had named Amahroq, pretending to be outraged, suggested burying him alive.

The man had now been pulled down from his indifferent mount, rolled over on the ground and ferociously trampled on; among the sneering and insults of the audience.

(1) Exterminated' in this context

(2) Tribal chief

(3) Son of Muha U Hamu Zayani, khalifa of the Pasha of Khenifra

(4) Chairman of the Djema'a

Oh! So you are the hakem⁽¹⁾, you hideous monkey? Well, here is for you!

The poor man, showered with more and more violent blows, could not take anymore. Eventually, someone suggested that the culprit be hanged to see how the Christian would behave under the rope. He was carefully tied hand and foot and four men pounced on him to carry him to the place where he was to receive his punishment while he was trying to soften his tormenters by carrying on his joke:

Do forgive me my dear Qaid, and you too Amahroq with the magnificent rezza⁽²⁾ I shall withdraw my troops from Khenifra and Zawiya and shall sail back to my country. You will never see me again.

However, the adamant and tumultuous mob would not have any of that. They wanted to take revenge for the severe insults that the Berbers had incurred and laugh at the expense of the one who had caused them.

Thus, the procession made for a decaying house where a timber plank was at hand for the job, while three entirely hooded young wags walked before the culprit, bringing him the relief of religion in their own way:

Oh God of stinking carrions, have mercy on the carrion we are sending you. Burn it up and purify the air. It stinks, Oh Muhamed, but you are great and merciful.

Luckily enough, at that very moment, an uproar resounded close to the sanctuary of Sidi El Mekki, bringing about a diversion and causing a sudden bustling movement in the crowd.

A gigantic fellow, proudly sat on his grey horse, rode through the Suq in all directions, shouting the call for notables. These latter made for the holy tomb, walking slowly and majestically, and sat on the graves, among paving stones and rank weeds.

Immediately, the crowd left their shaking victim, dashed to the Djema'a in an indescribable uproar and stood in groups around their chiefs, each according to his tribe. Finding a place to sit was not an easy task as each group insisted on sitting in the front row.

Eventually, the warriors huddled as well as they could on the graves, with legs crossed around their rifle butts which were set up to the sky, just like the

(1) French chief

(2) Turban

trees of a forest, before complete silence prevailed. Then, the village amghar proudly stood up and called for the attention of the audience:

- Pray on the Prophet, Oh Berbers

- May God's prayer and salute be upon him.

- Welcome, brothers!

- May God's blessings be upon you.

- You probably know the purpose of this meeting, don't you ?

- We want to kick out the rumi.

- We will drive him out, God willing, and if you are determined.

- Let the Djema'a order and we will execute...

- Well, then, get ready, for thanks to God, the time of our deliverance announced by our igurramen⁽¹⁾ has come. Can you see this plain? It is covered by our flocks which are in the care of only a handful of little children. Look beyond the Ben Khelil River where our women and daughters fearlessly move about, within aiming distance of the enemy. Our horsemen have, yesterday, been as far as Tadjemou't without meeting a living soul. The Zawya position has been quiet for months and its mokhaznis⁽²⁾, those cursed renegades, do not dare leave it. Do look at the sky : it is clear and spotless, the ibukha (insects: planes), which used to infest it have been swept away by divine baraka⁽³⁾. Fear is so great in all the positions of the Christian that their chiefs spend all their time trying to get information about our doings. Our prisoners have never been so well treated. Even Ittu Muhand's son who has never had a clean shirt at home has been given new clothes. And yet, we have deceived the rumi for six months and we have made promises which we never kept. Don't you think that the enemy has now realized that he is condemned to defeat and that he aims, through being generous to us, to insure his own protection on the day when we will proceed to annihilate him?

- Yes, yes!

- Well then, let's not waste time anymore, let's act.

- We are ready!

(1) Renowned religious personalities

(2) Native auxiliaries

(3) Divine power

- Besides, as Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi⁽¹⁾ said: the canons and rifles of the enemy will not be able to get us.

- We already know them and we are not scared of them.

- This is certain oh brothers!. I well remember the battles of Tabaynut, A'ar'ar, Bu Mussa, Buhayati, and more particularly that of El Herri when the shells raised the mountains under our feet without ever managing to make us fall back. Let us then nominate our guarantors.

Then, the warriors stood up and members of each tribe retired under a tree or against their previously assigned rock to deliberate among brothers.

As a matter fact, the discussions did not take long as the groups had chosen their men before the general assembly. However, the Ait Ishaq, the Ait Ben Messa'ud and the Shorfas⁽²⁾ of Taskert proved quite reluctant in finally electing their war chiefs. In fact, their enthusiasm gradually cooled off at the thought of being the first, and perhaps the only ones, to undergo retaliatory action as their land was the nearest to French occupied territory, in the most likely case where the war plans of Ishqern would not meet the expected success.

For this was not the first time the flight of the rumi had been heralded. This is something that was quite frequently discussed, at every beginning of the spring season, but the only immediate result was a greater activity of the *blue horsemen* and disastrous razzias on the bordering clans. The old Shaf'i of Ait Ben Messa'ud was even so convinced about the enemy's power that he could not hide his skepticism: he had been to the Khenifra's military post and the French chief had shown him his canons and rifles.

As to the Taskert Shorfas, pacific dealers of timber planks and devoted, after all, to their old protector Amahroq who was now siding with the French, they had not been daring enough to refuse to attend the meeting, but had informed their friend that in case a decision to go to war was made, they would find excuses to refrain from being involved in the hostilities.

Be that as it may, those who within each fraction sided with the war party won, and people gathered again around the sanctuary and the notables of the place.

(1) Religious personality who had been for years attempting to lead the movement of resistance against the French in the Middle Atlas.

(2) Descendants or so-called descendants of the prophet.

Then, steadily and slowly, without even raising his eyes, each nominated guarantor made himself known to the chairman of the meeting and in the solemn tone that suited the situation pronounced the formula that definitely committed his group to the policy of war : *Usigh Ait flan* (I pledge Ait so and so and pledge myself for their behavior)

When the ceremony was over and closed with a formal *fatiha*⁽¹⁾, enthusiasm overwhelmed again and, those who were late to do so did their shopping among uproars of joy and exalting firing volleys.

The group of guarantors who now had to elect a common war chief and draw up a plan for their campaign were led to the war amghar by a frenzied crowd, while the young horsemen, who were impatient to show off their skill to the assembled tribes, invaded the free spaces on the western approaches to the village and staged repeated impetuous charges.

(1) Prayer

Chapter II : The Alert

That night, everything was asleep and quiet at the French post, except for the sentries who tried to penetrate the mystery of the darkness that surrounded them.

In the duwars of the goumiers and mokhaznis which were close to the other side of the post, the same hush prevailed. Even the drone of the family hand mills could not be heard, nor could one hear the women's sweet lamenting songs that accompanied the drone.

Regular soldiers and auxiliaries, who were worn out by on-going hard work or by far away patrolling were taking a rest, quite content with their monotonous existence. The post commander himself, Captain Alain, who had spent the day on horseback, inspecting the water points and the various resources of the Aqissari plateau, had now gone back to his room and was sleeping, trustful of the peace which reigned all around him.

However, from time to time, a flare went up in a luminous trail, compelling the prowler lurking in the grass to lie down further, and the guards to keep a low profile at their positions, thus avoiding the treacherous bullet of a *salopard*⁽¹⁾ lying in ambush.

Grenades which had been casually thrown in the thin wire entanglements exploded with a crashing sound, spreading terror among the jackals which were busy rummaging through the rubbish heaps, and letting loose a deafening concert by the dogs of the duwar for which the well-advised Arms Commander had doubled the guard.

Then, every hour, the searchlights which had been scheduled on a meager budget, would suddenly flare from the various angles of the fortress, lighting in their turn the great veil of the night and attracting for a few minutes, over the parapet, eyes which were eager to see and know. Still, the enemy was nowhere to be seen, with the luminous beams enclosing only the hares and

1. A term implying more indulgence than hostility, used by the French who did not like to use the word enemy to refer to their Moroccan opponents. The shade of meaning does reveal a state of mind and is worth-mentioning. Among civilians, the nuance is demonstrated by an absolute exclusion of offensive attributes from the language of Europeans.

hedge-hogs which would have been fired at twenty times from the amused group on the rampart, had the matter not been looked into properly.

The night was similar to all nights on the Moroccan front where the Berber brigand, wall driller, thief of rifles and assassin, are absolute masters.

Night is the time for trickery and daring strikes, when the opponent is disguised as a bush, as a shrub or as a fox to face a private who has not entirely given up the idea of dying in a *regular way* in spite of all the experience he has gone through, standing behind the lined stones or with his head well framed in a look-out slit.

However, and in spite of the extreme vigilance of the sentries, a man managed to creep to within thirty meters of the barbed wire. Lying down flat on the ground in the dark night against a pile of stones which will protect him from the shot of a highly-strung guard, he listened and observed.

This, however, was not a felon, for although a number of heads stood out in profile above the dark defensive wall, he did resist the temptation to shoot. Instead, a sudden anguish wrung his heart every time a shadow appeared in the starlit sky, as he realized that if an insurgent had been in his position at that moment, the garrison would most certainly have suffered a new casualty. Besides, he was able to easily identify friendly silhouettes on the wall.

There, close to the iron-sheet covered sentry box, he could single out the silhouette of Ahmed Tadlawi, an almost arabised Berber whose kaki uniform had spared him from the exactions of his Qaid.

Further, quite close to a machine gun position, there certainly was ‘Umar U Buhaddu, a familiar visitor to the tent of Shawush Lahsen U ‘Ali where he told so many delightful stories.

The two men whose tribes knew how to make war and who were more than anybody else aware of the dangers of the night in the presence of the insurgents, walked to and fro along the defensive wall, with their bodies erect and their shoes hammering the ground, in an inadvisably provocative manner.

They even exposed themselves with so much carelessness above the parapet or through the lookout slits that the man who had them this night at the end of his rifle’s muzzle was really sorry.

That’s just like the French thought Taybi, for the mysterious visitor was in fact the informer that everybody knew at the post. That’s their strange

understanding of the war in our country. Instead of making the Berbers they enroll fight against the night prowler in their own way, they weigh them down as much as they can, obliging them to constantly march under aiming rifles or, to court danger as targets through big windows. I am certain that if the Tadlawi had been here on guard in his duwar, he would have discovered me a long time ago. But now that he has swapped his djellaba⁽¹⁾ for a greatcoat and his blaghis⁽²⁾ for studded shoes, he has become another man, self conscious and even careless. How could he, with all the heavy and noisy outfit he has been accoutered in, be aware of the presence of 'snakes' who creep through the grass. A few moments ago, a big stone rolled under my feet without arousing the attention of the people beyond the surrounding fence. Then, why do they insist on piercing holes in the stone so large that a man cannot stand behind them without running the danger of being shot in the head, instead of holes just big enough to see what's going on outside ?

It is true that the French garrisons, when they come under attack, never go out and fire at the assailants through the crenels, but why don't they have in addition to the lookout slits, less vulnerable observation positions ? I will tell the Hakem about all this...

However, at the very moment when he was preparing to send the usual signal to the lookout men, Taybi was overcome by an intense anxiety. There was a dog, a big one, which walked to him sniffing the ground and dully grumbling. The horrifying beast was standing there, about fifty meters from him, and the terrified man could see it, ready to pounce on him. What could he do? Move? Shout? That would mean certain death at the animal's fangs, which he imagined to be terrible, and at the firing of the riflemen men who would suddenly be aroused from their deep thinking.

To throw to the beast meat balls which real professionals always carry in anticipation of similar adventures? Obviously, that would be the best way of getting rid of the unexpected foe, but the gesture it implied would also be noticed from the wall and would, most certainly, initiate a dangerous rifle-fire.

Who knows? Perhaps the awakened soldiers of the neighboring bastion were already at their famous taraka (machine gun), preparing themselves to deluge the suspected zone with a shower of shots.

(1) Large woolen garment with sleeves

(2) Slippers

Actually, a few seconds had hardly elapsed when the sharp detonation of a flare-pistol resounded, immediately followed by a shrill sound that rent the air and left the unfortunate Taybi without a doubt about his fate.

In just a few moments, the cursed machine would get to the end of its race and burst, lighting up the sky with its numerous stars that will then come down slowly, very slowly indeed, as though they meant to prolong the agony of those who dreaded light.

If, at least, the abominable dog, would relent, but it was always there getting closer and closer and barking louder and louder, obviously calling for help, before pouncing on its shaking victim.

Besides, who could say what was hidden behind the neighboring bramble where the real prowlers usually lie in ambush? Wouldn't the ill-timed light signal the presence of the Christians' friend to other enemies, even more dangerous than the soldiers and the dogs

Then, the informer who was now surrounded by danger from all sides, and losing hope that he would extricate himself from such a situation, tried his ultimate luck. Linking hands in a speaking-tube manner in the direction of the post, he desperately shouted: Reqqas, Reqqas⁽¹⁾. He would have liked to shout his name to his friends, but they would not perhaps be the only ones to hear it, and when he would be home later, he would have to pay dearly for his devotion to the invading rumi.

As a matter of fact, the sky suddenly lit up and, in spite of his call, a crackling of rifle fire resounded in the fortlet, spreading innumerable dirty things around him. Reqqas, Reqqas he shouted again. Meanwhile, his first enemy joined by a dozen of its fellow creatures, passionately dashed forward to the man's hiding place. But, stopping the firing of a machine gun is not an easy task, and the short, jerky burst of gunfire went on relentlessly.

The Tadlawi himself joined in, quite happy to burn a few, however haphazardly, and he already had about twenty empty cartridge cases.

Ultimately, the police post sergeant rushed to the scene with a rattling of bayonets, shortly followed by Captain Alain.

1. Messenger, informer

Quite quickly, the officer realized that a mistake had been made and ordered to stop firing. At the same time, the mokhazni on duty who had arrived with him proceeded to open the door of the military work and they rushed to Taybi's rescue.

He had not been shot, but he was still trying to deal with the pack of dogs that had already torn his garments into tatters. His stick was distributing whacks and his mouth was shouting curses. But it was all in vain. The mokhaznis, who owned the dogs, had to come to his rescue, showering him with curses for having been directly to the military post when his instructions were to report at the auxiliaries' duwar first.

You'd better tie up your pug dogs, you cowards. Do I have a choice of which way to come? Let me go to a safe place. I will never come here again.

And, raging at his terrifying experience, he followed Shawush Lahsen who was instructed to take him to the Bureau .

However, at the very moment his companion, who had been grumbling at him all the way, was about to go through the door to the post, a bullet fired by an unexpected felon broke the lantern that he was carelessly carrying, and hit the wall stones.

Then, the two men cut short their colloquy and surged to the military work, while the search-light which had been alerted by the unusual detonation, started again to search the approaches to the position. In the mean time, the prowler who was most proud of his daring deed vanished in the bled that conspired to shelter his flight.

Having recovered from his frightful experience that he had related in detail to Captain Alain and his Shawush, Taybi described the El Qebab meeting to the officer.

- Get ready, for they are set to go to war against you. Muha Ashqir has been elected amghar and everybody agrees. Rezzas (turbans) have been exchanged as a sign of alliance. Each tribe in the Dir has committed itself to mobilize its horsemen permanently at Ma'ammar, at Tinteghallin, at El Qebab, at Kerushen, and to dispatch them to the war chief at a word of command. The people of the Muluya have also pledged their co-operation. You are, thus, warned: the danger will not be for today, nor tomorrow. I still am not sure where the attack is to take place, but there is no doubt whatsoever that one of your positions will be attacked within the next few days if, by that time, nothing is done against the insurgents. And now, I'd like to return to the Djebel where people must see me; I will be able to inform you about the situation from there.

And, if I am not able to come back personally, you know how closely I am watched and you have just seen the kind of dangers I am exposed to at your service, my sister Fatma will bring you the news, your Shawush knows her well and I will give her thamathart.⁽¹⁾

- You are rather in a hurry Taybi, and you still look too affected by emotion. So, take a seat, calm down and tell me, at least, how yesterday's brothers, so peaceful and well-disposed, could have thought of such a scheme.

- What more do you want to know? What is certain is that danger is looming, that's all that matters. Just assume, if you wish, that the idle mountain men have decided to get people to talk about them once again...

- That is no excuse for wise men, for notables who not long ago used to demonstrate signs of friendship ...

- Why do you think they did so then? Do you believe our elders are that wise? May be individually they are wise, but when they meet as a Djema'a, they behave more like a flock, they blindly follow their tghesht ⁽²⁾

- You are right, I know all this pretty well, but the tghesht could have remained on the path of peace...

- The tghesht chose to follow the path of war, and everybody is going to bleat with joy behind it.

- Well, then, Taybi, there are things you won't tell me that I need to know. I grant you that the mob is stupid, that is the way in all countries. But, where I come from, we French people also manage to know the motives behind the ringleaders' behavior.

- It is the same here, Captain. And, it is even so simple that I don't understand the why of your questions. You are not new in this country, are you?

- Of course, I am not, I did not arrive yesterday! However, I must confess that in the present case, I am at a loss. Everything was going so well so far...

- That's it, exactly !. That's the reason you are looking for: it is because everything was going so well and because the country has been so peaceful for troopers for many months now that the Dir is in such a turmoil. Not only

(1) Password.

(2) A ewe that walks at the head of a flock to guide and drag it.

have your horsemen been left idle, but you have released a number of prisoners and distributed aid to the old men and women who came here for health treatment, and the prisoners who are still here are much better fed and clad than they would be at home. You have even heaped with kindness a man who came to you only to deceive you.

Therefore, in the Dir where people have never shown mercy to the enemy, everybody believes that such behavior is a sign of weakness on your part. And, now that the cold weather is gone, that the harvest promises to be good and that you have spared the flocks by letting them graze under your walls without 'eating'⁽¹⁾ them, people are set to go to war against you. At yesterday's meeting, not one participant raised his voice to say that you are a good man, that you are powerful, and yet, you have friends among the mountain people. Who among them would have thought about defending you against so many fools? You see, Captain, the Berber man is most certainly worthy of interest, but he deserves to be well treated only when he has recognized his defeat and declared his submission. Before this submission takes place, and in order to hasten it, strikes should not be spared when dealing with him.

- But, what you are telling me here does not make sense. You mean that because I have welcomed and behaved well towards poor people, because I have given the dissidents peace, they have decided to attack me? That is enough to discourage the most well-disposed amongst men. Anyway, this is the first time I come across so much ungratefulness.

- Why are you talking about ungratefulness? The dissidents do not in any way think that they owe you gratitude.

- And yet, they did promise to give up the fight at the end of the winter and their notable Sa'id Muha U Haddu himself had shown so much friendship that he supplied me with sheep

- Yes, of course they did make you promises, but haven't I already told you that hard pressed Berbers will resort to any stratagem likely to pull them momentarily through, particularly when they have to deal with foreigners belonging to a faith other than theirs? Trickery, for us, is a war strategy, as good and as honorable as any other means.

- Well, well! That's really nice!...

(1) Here meaning to raid/plunder

- *It is this way in any case as I have always told you. The problem is, you always reason according to your own mentality and your earnestness, and, as you can see, the outcome is far from brilliant.*

- *But, still, the dissidents cannot have already forgotten the lessons we have inflicted on them? Then again, they are aware of the fact that the post is still strong and that with one word, I am able to mobilize thousands of other warriors, as well as canons and planes?*

- *They do know, and they have not forgotten nor do they ignore any of that, but they don't pay any attention to it. They have been defeated and pillaged many a time, so what? Besides, all you did was to react to attacks you had incurred. You say that you can call in columns, well, they will just retreat before your troops then, and when they are gone, things will go back to their original state.*

- *They could as well remain and occupy the country.*

- *Yes, by all means, but the Berbers don't think so. Besides, they don't think that deeply. There is only one thing that is of interest to them, that is the present. When conditions are unfavorable, they roll like a hedge-hog and lie in wait. As soon as the situation improves, they recover their courage again. Today, the conditions seem ideal and they plan to take advantage of the situation, which, obviously is their right. You see, your biggest mistake is that you are not trying to reason like them. You could catch them in the winter at the foot of the slopes. The problem is that before striking, you always wait to receive the first blow.*

- *But my counterattacks are terrible!*

- *That's what you think, to say the least. For in fact, you strike with so much reluctance when you have to, and then you are so sorry about the fate that has befallen your foes that the impact of your success does not last long.*

- *Yes, indeed. I feel no pleasure at killing and I am far from being indifferent to others' suffering. But, you will yourself admit that magnanimity has already won me a number of friends in the mountain. Therefore, I can't see any reason why I should not entertain the hope that the number of allies will gradually grow and that one day...*

- *...the insurgents will welcome you in their houses with hot meshwi. You have already told me the same thing many a time. However, once again you are making a terrible mistake. A self-respecting Berber will never submit to*

you without struggle, unless he resigns himself in advance to disgrace. I myself, whose people are on the other side, think you had better make war in the way it should be made, that is by showing that you can be callous and merciless, just as you can be strong and courageous. For, we Berbers will genuinely bow only before a man who knows how to make himself feared. Do recall what happened on the year you arrived in this country: those you supplied with sugar were the first to turn against you. How, then can you expect to pacifically enter the Ishqern country? Do you think the Dir tribes are any different from the Zayan? Do they have fewer rifles and less horses? Do you think your syasa⁽¹⁾ has become more persuasive since you arrived in Turguilal?

- Of course not, but the situation has now changed. During the period that you are alluding to, the insurgents doubted the reality of our power because the European war, whose leaders used to say that it had ruined us in terms of manpower, had just ended. On the other hand, we were living on the memory of the unfortunate El Herri affair which was the last important feat of arms in the region⁽²⁾. However, now that we have achieved a deep enough advance by settling here, and that a number of columns from Tadla and Meknes are ready to intervene, people should be more convinced about the danger of adopting a hostile attitude towards us. As to submissions without combat which you say are impossible, those of Ait Bu Mzil in the Zayans, of Ait 'Arfa, of Ait Izdeg and of Uled Lkhawa in the Muluya constitute a flat, categorical denial to your claim.

- I don't agree with you. The Ait Bu Mzil gave in because Amahroq, their relative who knows his business and his people, had called upon them to do as he did and rally to the other side, or they would be raided from top to bottom. What happened then is that they gave in to a power that they knew was real. As to the people of the Muluya, if they actually submitted to the French without combat, they later regretted it, and they were blamed for it so much that they rose in rebellion at the first opportunity that availed itself, that is when a rogui⁽³⁾ appeared, whether genuine or false, in the far South of the country. Besides, the tribes you are talking about have given birth only to grocers and date merchants and have nothing in common with the real full blooded Ait Umalu.

(1) Soft policy, policy of persuasion

(2) Reference to the 13 November 1914 battle of El Herri, close to Khenifra, during which a French detachment led by Colonel Laverdure was decimated (See La Montagne Berbère)

(3) A warlord, pretender to the throne

- *You really have an answer to everything and I think we should cut this discussion short. Still, it is not because the mountain men do not understand me that I should despair of their intelligence and common sense. But, I do admit that in order to get my way with them, I need an ally who is able to bring them to reason. Thus, at this very moment, I am certain that if one of the notables who were present at the meeting in El Qebab would ostentatiously fail to lend support to the insurgents, things would change drastically. Sa'id Muha U Haddu, for example...*

- *Don't you count on him. He will never come back to see you, given that he has deceived you, he would be afraid of going to prison.*

- *I would grant him the aman⁽¹⁾...*

- *Surely, and everyone knows that you are a real man of his word. However, I still persist in thinking that Sa'id is not your man. Besides, his brothers must have chosen him as a go-between this winter, that is in the most critical moment, because they blindly trusted him, and this very fact would prevent him from being your ally, if he ever wished to be one someday. You don't easily give up a position of great honor among your brothers in order to serve the enemy.*

- *In that case, do you have someone else in mind?*

- *Yes, I do know a lot of other notables who could serve you. There is an amghar in particular at Ait Ishaq who would be ready to sell himself in order to get out of his mediocre situation. But, what could I tell this man to tempt him? That you promise to make him commander of his tribe? I don't think he would believe me, for he knows that with you French people, it is better to come in last if you want to be considered a man of character, worthy of consideration. That you would pay him generously? That would cost you a lot, for El Hadj 'Ali, that is the name of the amghar I have in mind, is extremely greedy. In any way, he would not be happy with the 30 Francs you so generously grant your friend Taybi every time he risks his life to serve you. However, if you will only believe me, you do have a much better way of getting peace. A well conducted razzia... Isn't that so Shawush Lahsen?*

Although he was in total agreement with the speaker's suggestion, Shawush Lahsen took good care not to venture a direct response to the informer. A good auxiliary, who is his chief's usual confidant, would never dare give his opinion in the presence of a stranger, unless he is explicitly invited to do so by his

(1) Safeguard

officer. Besides, Lahsen was busy making tea, a most pleasant and absorbing task for a Moroccan, to which he gave all his attention.

However, having noticed that Captain Alain had dropped the conversation to check some documents and take notes, he thought it necessary -that was also his role- to butt in and prevent the man from the mountain from thinking too much and making up stories. He also wanted, as a measure of precaution, to elicit information about the situation of the flocks.

- Very dear Taybi, you think the insurgents are intent on waging war against us ?

- Yes, dear Lahsen. Does that scare you ?

- Why not ? One should always apprehend danger from one's foes, Ishqern more than anybody else.

- What ? So you too have come to that ? You believe in the brags of the Djebel jokers ? Then, we'd better stop this discussion...

- Don't get carried away Taybi and answer my questions without any more fuss. What do you think we can do against the ten thousand horsemen from the Dir? Defend ourselves at best...

- But, you well know that there are not ten thousand of them, and that each of your mokhaznis, well armed and supplied with a hundred cartridges, is worth a hundred of their warriors.

- That's what we always believe to boost our courage. Then, one of these days, the mokhaznis are caught unawares and get themselves disemboweled like sheep on the day of A'id Kebir⁽¹⁾. Now, I do value my life and am not ready to expose it, particularly now that the flocks of the insurgents are far away, and that you have to walk for half a day before you can see the tail of a sheep.

- Who told you so?

- Nobody told me, but I suppose that before they decided to declare war on us, the mountain men did not fail to secure their belongings. Would they have altered their strategy?

- They are stationed very close to where we are now, not worrying too much about the military post. The Ben Khelil River is daily invaded by a great

(1) A great Muslim feast called 'sheep feast', given that every family who can afford to must kill a sheep for the occasion.

number of flocks, and so are the plains of Tighessalin, Sidi Bu 'Ali and Awrir. And, do you know who is keeping watch on those flocks ? Children and three or four horsemen for each tribe.

You might as well say that the insurgents are intent on giving you their livestock, or rather that they know that you are so scared that they have no apprehension in this respect.

- They are right to think so, for we will never attack them as the Captain, who is a wise man, does not want any bloodshed.

- In that case, you'd better take precautionary measures.

- We have indeed taken them and our ramparts are sturdy. If your insurgents come to challenge us here, they will indeed meet their match. As a matter of fact, you must have realized that machine guns are not lacking and that they are on the look out even at night.

When he heard this, Captain Alain did not misjudge the real meaning of his auxiliary's words and he could not but be grateful to him for concealing this meaning while at the same time covertly and cleverly eliciting information about the vulnerability of the insurgents, thus allowing the Captain to keep his imperative reserve.

However, realizing that the conversation between the two men had taken too long, he decided to direct it himself and bring it to an end:

- All right then Taybi, try and convince El Hadj 'Ali that he should come and see me in his own interest as well as that of his tribe. Don't make him any promises but tell him that I am accurately informed about his worth and that he will be rewarded appropriately. If he agrees, he can come by day or night, as he wishes. Here is an aman letter that guarantees his safety in our lines during his visit, whatever the outcome of our meeting. Of course, you will come with him and I will name a meeting place to be known to you at the last moment when you will have informed me about his arrival to Tibhirin or to the Qsar of Muha U 'Ali Ujhayn. Pending your next visit, I'd like to be immediately informed about any new developments. When the assembly order for the tribes' horsemen is given, I'd like you to inform me about it immediately by lighting simultaneously, with the help of your relatives, two fires on the Djebel Bugrir and two on the plateau overlooking Sidi Sa'id. This said, you can now go back as day break is approaching and I have nothing more to tell you. Here are a hundred francs for you to get another burnous. The Shawush will also give you four sugar loaves and tea for your family. May God be with you...

With daybreak actually getting close, Taybi left the post, accompanied to the door by the Shawush. Then, going deep into in the Zawiya ravine, he quickly disappeared while Captain Alain, who was now by himself, went back to his thinking again.

The officer's perplexity was indeed great when he realized that his plan had fallen through, and that the outcome of his policy was far from encouraging.

Most certainly, this was not the first time that the insurgents had broken their word and he was confident that his chiefs would not hold his failure against him. However, he could not forgive himself for having been deceived, particularly as he had been in the country for many years and that the notables who had just tricked him were the same people who had eluded submission at Sidi Lamin and at Khenifra, on the eve of the very day it was supposed to take place.

Then again, he was really sorry that he doubted the sincerity of his Shawush who had spoken the same words as Taybi, and also sorry about the fact that he had totally ignored the dissatisfaction of his goumiers whose inaction had led to their discharge.

- I should have, he thought, trusted the brave Lahsen more. He has always been beyond reproach in his behavior, ever since he has been following me like a poodle. I also made a mistake in sacrificing some of my good auxiliaries to win over the people on the other side. In doing so, I have not only disorganized the Goum which was so wonderfully set up to accomplish its mission but, as both Lahsen and Taybi have formally stated, I have provided the insurgents with means to resume the fight. Definitely, I need to change methods and, since the soft way has once again proved inefficient, I am going to strike. Concerning the events that took place at El Qebab, I will take care not to make a tragedy of them.

Taybi has informed me about an imminent attack, but this very good friend seems to forget that this threat against the posts is not the first of its kind, and that it may disappear as happened before as a result of rivalries between the chiefs. Besides, if El Hadj 'Ali agrees to coming to see me, I will quickly manage to convince him to help me. However that may be, let's take our precautions, let me inform my chiefs and the neighboring posts and let me try and regain the confidence of the goumiers and mokhaznis by making them realize that we are in for a change of situation.

He then gave orders for the external service to begin only on the return of the cavalry patrol in charge of exploring the areas surrounding the post. He

tried to call up the District Commander and the Arms Commanders in the region, but he could not get through: the line had been cut off during the night. Next, he wrote a message, hoping to be able to have it transmitted by optic telegraph, but none of the posts called responded to the firemen's signals.

When all else failed, he resigned himself to writing a report which he immediately dispatched to the district chief town with four horsemen who were instructed to take a diverted route. Following that, he attended to organizing around the post a reinforced security service and restoring the telephone communications.

However, at the moment he was about to order the reparation team to move out, he realized that the fact that the line disconnection had taken place only a few hours after the insurgents' meeting could very well be the sign of an ambush. Therefore, he took the decision to break off the habit and personally carry out the necessary reconnaissance, to provide protection for the reparation work, using all the available cavalry men, suspending any current tasks in the post and instituting a state of emergency during his absence.

Chapter III : The Agression

At the brief ringing of a bell in the post, the Turgilal which a few moments before was quiet and gloomy, was once again full of life.

Infantry and cavalry men feverishly equipped themselves and came out one by one from their shelter pits, while the women and children of auxiliaries invaded the stables and, just as they did not so long ago among their tribes, saddled their warriors' mounts.

Then, quietly and in perfect order, happy goumiers and artillery men proceeded to their combat positions while the cavalry which was assembled against the main building waited, out of sight of the nearby mountains, for the moment to fly towards the enemy. The hubbub that took place during the night and Captain Alain's efforts to call up his chief did not leave any doubt in the minds of the garrison members that the tacit truce observed so far had been broken, and that there was going to be a battle.

However, the timing of the alert surprised everybody: you don't get mobilized in this way, in daylight and in full view of the insurgents, when you plan to attempt a strike. Instead, troops are assembled at night, taking a thousand precautions. They try to reach a favorable hiding place and, when the opponents' flocks, which constitute an invariable target for every expedition in this land of pastoral people, are within assault reach, you pounce on the flocks, indulge in a little fighting and quickly get back, protecting your catch.

Was this then an offensive by the enemy? There was no explicit sign of it as everything was quiet around the Turgilal and the lynx-eyed horsemen scanned in vain the slopes, paths and wide open deep gullies of the mountains on the other side. There was nobody to be seen.

The only sign of life at this early morning hour in the newly hostile Dir was the smoke from the insurgents' duwars established close to Sidi Bu 'Ali.

What does it matter, anyway! The most important is that at last, a war-like bell ring had been heard after so many months, and that the coming day would perhaps be different.

Therefore, everybody was patiently and confidently waiting, while the families, now gathered against the *zeriba*⁽¹⁾ of the mokhaznis' duwar, commented on the event in their own way, giving way to the most improbable suppositions.

Meanwhile, Captain Alain had assembled his officers and non-commissioned officers in his office and, having summarily briefed them on the situation, he made his last recommendations to the officer in charge of the post during his absence.

Then, he joined the outgoing detachment which was presented to him by the Goum warrant officer and Shawush Lahsen. He gave the detachment necessary relevant information about what had happened during the night and instructions concerning the operation.

As the telephone has been out of order since this morning, I take it that the line has been cut off by the insurgents who have made up their minds, so it seems, to go back to war again. We are, therefore going to proceed with the reparation of the telephone line. As soon as we reach the Seru, we will line up in battle formation.

At these words, which spoke volumes and at which they were elated, the warriors were careful enough not to show their delight, which would accentuate further the political failure of their chief much too bluntly. But, they clasped their rifles more firmly, with their eyes becoming more and more shining.

Their horses, which already felt the sharp pain of the spur and bridle bit, could not keep still. Briskly, each of them flung back the flap ends of his cumbersome burnous, diving his hand into the deep ammunition saddlebag to charge his rifle magazine.

Then, in single file behind their chief, whom they knew was intent at last to take appropriate action against the insurgents, the goums and mokhaznis entered the narrow path leading to the Seru and Aqissari rivers, followed by two French telephonists from the reparation team perched up on their all skin and bone mules.

The telephone line linking the post to the district chief town went parallel to the motor track leading to Khenifra, very close to the dissidence front which was marked by the Seru River. However, as the area was strongly hollowed

(1) A thorn hedge, set around the tents of nomads to protect them against night prowlers. Also used as an animal pen

out, in all directions, it is in many parts not visible to the Ait Ishaq and Tadjemu't garrisons which were commissioned to protect and maintain it. Thereby, it was fairly easy for the insurgents to reach it day and night and damage the wire, the isolators and the fragile telephone poles as they wished, before going back home, unbothered. For that matter, the Ishqern did not fail, in the beginning of the occupation, to indulge in regular destructions of this kind, in fact with the mere aim of playing a nasty trick on the rumi. Then, when they realized that after every damaging action on their part, a small group would leave one of the posts to carry out the reparation work, they adopted another strategy. In fact, they would use very strong groups, able not only to destroy the equipment, but also to lie in ambush close to the place of their misdeed and stage an attack on the team of firemen and their weak escort at the propitious moment. It was in this way that a number of posts had incurred unfortunate losses.

Now, just the day before, about fifty Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa (Ishqern) warriors who had attended the impressive meeting at El Qebab and returned in a state of extreme excitement had decided to enjoy the honor of being the first to open hostilities and to try and do something on that very evening against the Christian.

They were young, sturdy and well armed. They rode horses which had rested from the labor of the last plowing and had been stuffed with barley and grass. They had agreed to reiterate the telephone trick and selected to this end the plateau of Aqissari which they could reach within two hours and which offered an excellent probability of success.

Afterwards, having supplied themselves with a few buttered griddlecakes, and bottles of milk or tea, they had quickly elected a *harka*⁽¹⁾ amghar. Then, they quietly moved through the Djebel Bu Tnifest towards the *Timririt Nhaddu U Fruk*, a basin named after a mokhazni who had been killed there in 1920. There, they knocked down some twenty telephone poles, broke or carried away a number of isolators, caused a dozen cuts in the wires and took up position for a surprise attack.

When daylight came, they were divided in the following way: fifteen horsemen at the only passable ford on the friendly bank of the Seru, with as a mission to cover the group's retreat in case of need. Twenty horsemen were posted in the shrub forest close to the telephone equipment which had been damaged.

1. Here a band. Normally meaning a small army

The harka amghar adopted these dispositions in agreement with his companions and was convinced that not one French mokhazni or soldier would come out of it safe and sound, although, contrary to the previous cases, the total strength of the reparation team and its escort was somewhat higher than expected. As a result, hope among the members of the group was great, and it was while brooding over the booty which would make him rich, that each of the *djicheurs*⁽¹⁾ who had not been nominated as a member of the observation team dropped off to sleep in the thick wood, with his rifle between his legs and the bridle of his horse casually tied to a branch near by. The signal to be ready for combat was to be given by the observers, imitating the owl's ululation.

By then, Captain Alain's horsemen had reached the Seru and taken up their positions for a possible battle. A group of ten goum men moved along the left bank of the river to, in case of need, take in reverse the insurgents who had entered the Aqissari area.

The remaining members of the detachment had crossed to the other bank, leaving four horsemen to ensure the immediate protection of the telephonists during their inspection of the line and while they were undertaking the reparation work.

As to the officer, he was totally absorbed in his own thoughts. He could imagine his chief in Khenifra at receiving his report, reflecting on each word in the report, checking all the information with his comrades on the front, and eventually reporting to the Territory, to the Army-Corps District and to the Residents'hip. He would be sorry in advance for this multiplicity of administrative bureaucratic hustle and for the loss of time it usually implied. It would be even worse in the present case where the dictates of his conscience warranted that he should speed up things if he wanted to avoid seeing the mountain ablaze.

Suddenly, a rifle shot echoed in the distance, soon to be followed by a well-sustained and ragged rifle fire. Hoarse shouts and desperate calls could be heard. Then, right before the very eyes of the stupefied Captain and his mokhaznis, but still far away towards the lame bridge, a number of horsemen clad in white burnouses fled at high speed towards the dissidents. Meanwhile, on the track, other men clad in the same way, but on foot, ran as swiftly as they could towards the detachment and the post. What on earth was going on?

(2) Bandits, prowlers. A group of gangsters making up a djish

The officer had other things on his mind. For the moment, the most important was to charge towards those who were moving to the hostile mountain and compel them to make a stand before they were able to cross the river and disappear behind the Bu Tnifest mountain.

Then, following a wave of the hand from the Captain, the chase started. In the twinkling of an eye, as though the shots had given the horses wings, the officer reached the bridge from which the elements to his right had already driven out the enemy through an attack on the flank. In the meantime, the Shawush who had rushed to the suspect footmen, supplied him with precise information about the amazing adventure.

I have just seen the men with white burnouses on the track. They are unarmed Zemmur⁽¹⁾ people who came to enlist in Makhzen. They were being led by mokhazni Raho U 'Ali who was coming back from his leave of absence and who was the only one with a rifle and horse. When they got to Timririt N'Haddu U Fruk, Raho, noticing that some sparrows did not venture to settle on a bush, suspected something fishy and galloped towards it to find a sleeping prowler on whom he unloaded his rifle. However, our men were quickly surrounded by a great number of Ishqern horsemen who had seen us as they were coming out of hiding. They just had time enough to take the mokhazni with his horse and rifle. The telephone line has been cut off at Timririt.

Thus informed about what had had happened, Captain Alain did not hesitate a moment. Now that one of his horsemen was in the hands of the insurgents, he had to rescue him, but it had to be done in accordance with the current instructions of the District Commander. During the chase, they would not go beyond the heights of the Djebel Bu Tnifest where their opponents would most certainly find plenty of support when they got close to the tents.

Furthermore, even if an officer was not in this respect tied to follow the formal regulations, dispatching his morning report would compel him to await decisions from the command in chief relating to the offensive that he had advocated. As to the captive, even supposing the enemy had managed to take him away, his fate did not worry him too much as he had a lot of exchange prisoners who were still at the post.

(1) Berber confederation settled around Khemisset, between Rabat and Meknes. The tribe supplied the front posts during the pacification campaign with 50% of their most reliable mokhaznis.

As orders had been quickly transmitted in this respect, the rifle-fire relented and the chase started again with more vigor, after the escort of the telephonists who had worked on the line was reinforced by six horsemen.

Climbing the slopes of the mountain under enemy firing among the rocks, the juniper trees and the thuyas, was a most difficult task. But the goumiers and mokhaznis, who were indeed familiar with all the paths, were not men who would flinch in front of such difficulties. Besides, they were stimulated by the presence of their chief whose grey horse could be seen at the most exposed places. They seemed to be completely unaware of the danger and rushed, with great ardor and total defiance of death, towards the positions from which the rifle shots came.

A goumier, whose horse had been shot dead went on fighting on foot after having taken off his shoes *to be more at ease and to be able to move quickly*.

Under the firing of rifles, a mokhazni who had just shot an insurgent indulged in lecturing him, although it was too late, on the consequences of insulting the rumis, and those who served them.

Eventually, after three hours of wild firing, the enemy troops having lost hope of dragging our men off to their duwars, took to flight and rapidly rode away, taking their catch but also leaving behind, in the hands of Captain Alain, two dead bodies which were immediately covered with earth, one rifle and three horses.

The detachment joined the firemen who had almost finished their work and everybody got back to the post, after the District Commander had been informed about the outcome of the engagement, using the country telephone apparatus that had been carried in the morning.

Chapter IV : Raho the Prisoner

Although the Berbers rarely put their prisoners to death after a battle, particularly when those prisoners are of their own blood, Raho knew too well the downright barbarity of the Ishqern, and the particular hatred they felt towards the mokhaznis to harbor any hope concerning his safety.

Having been stripped during the engagement and wearing only a squalid gandourah belonging to one of his captors, he sadly walked among the insurgents who ruthlessly heaped abuse and blows upon him.

- So, here you are in our hands, you renegade, you wretched dog... why don't you call the hakem to your rescue. He surely will come to take you back because, now that you are not there, who is going to kiss his feet, oh handsome Raho?

The poor Raho walked footsore and with his whole body bleeding. He did not curse anybody, or rather he cursed himself for having allowed himself to be taken so stupidly by leaving Khenifra without permission, with companions who were not yet armed, instead of waiting for a convoy or asking for rifles.

As to his tormentors, he could understand that they should behave in an inhuman way, for they were totally within their rights as victors.

He, therefore, merely begged that he be executed immediately. Then, exhausted, he started in his turn proffering insults, thus hoping to hasten his execution.

- Yes, you bandits with donkey faces, I do serve the rumi. I like him and I will serve him again tomorrow if I am free, just as you yourselves would be most flattered to serve him when he is in command here some day. He is better than you all because he is just, because he is kind, and because, when he happens to capture one of your people, he dresses his wounds instead of stripping him, he honors him instead of insulting him. You think you are men? In fact, you are only heartless brutes, despicable cowards without a flag to your name (idhwar la'lam). You do see that I deserve death a thousand times, but you do not dare kill me because you are shaking in advance at the idea of the punishment that will be inflicted on you.

But, new strikes lacerated his face and made his body give way under him.

- Yes, you do deserve death and that is what you will get, you pig. However, you will die a slow death, when firebrands will have put out your eyes and when our dogs will have cut you alive into strips, your bones will rot in the dung.

His torture thus lasted for hours, becoming more and more unbearable as they got closer and closer to the insurgents' tents.

In the Tighessalin plain, when the insurgents came rushing at the sound of the rifle-firing and learned that two of their people had been left dead on the battleground, when they heard the relatives of the dead men wailing, the situation of the poor prisoner became even worse, and he was treated so badly that he had to be hoisted on a mule, completely out of strength.

Eventually, they got to the duwar and the captive who was bound hand and foot and lying with his face to the sun, was handed over to the children.

Next, the cruelty inflicted on him became hallucinating. To this end, they used pikes, brambles, knives and stones, in fact everything that this retribution could find at hand to torment the moaning and worn out victim, without anybody feeling pity at so much suffering, not even God.

Yet, a man, still young, moved close to the tortured captive and spoke to him in a low voice, after he had pushed aside the kids :

- Raho, do you recognize me? I am Hussa U Mhend, the Buhaddiwi, father of your friend 'Ali U Hussa to whom you have offered hospitality so often and whom you have admitted under your tent among your wives and children. Do open your eyes if you can hear me and try to remember.

Remember! Good heavens! Yes he could of course remember, Raho could hear and understand. As to that voice, he could recognize it, it was that of the insurgent who had so often come to the bureau, who rendered so many services to the hakem and who had been forever excluded from the post because of the wickedness of a young mokhazni. But, how could he help him in this hellish situation?

- All right! Don't say anything for the moment; do act as though you don't know me. In a few moments when the men come back to you and when I am within reach of you, summon up all your strength and shout as loud as you possibly can that you are putting yourself under my protection. In the meantime, bear up and don't lose hope.

Then Hussa went back to the amghar's tent, having made a point of publicly spitting in the direction of his friend, as a sign of contempt.

Now that its thirst for revenge had been somewhat quenched and that the wailing outside had dropped, the Djema'a was, as a matter of fact, discussing what to do with the catches.

It had already decided that the horse and the rifle would be sold for the benefit of the people who had taken part in the harka, but no agreement had yet been reached concerning the prisoner.

Some were for killing him, yet others proposed to make of him a good Muslim again, to marry him and thus strengthen the clan with an outstanding warrior.

Eventually, the members of the Djema'a were about to leave without having reached a decision concerning the issue when a notable from Ait Bu Haddu who was sitting next to Hussa, his relative, casually said :

- I do think that this whole discussion is useless. I have just walked by the prisoner and have every reason to believe that he has passed away. Let's go and check, after that, we can decide on his fate if need be.

The man's suggestion having received general approval, everybody moved towards Raho who was dozing.

Hussa drew near him and called him in a rude way to awaken him. Realizing that he was not moving, he slapped him, raising a storm of laughter among the assistance.

Then, as the mokhazni slowly opened his eyes and looked up at the crowd, he recognized the author of the insulting action of which he understood the purpose and, in a voice that he vainly tried to make energetic, he said:

- Oh Berber, my brother whom I do not know and who has dared inflict such a demeaning affront on me when I am lying on the ground, tied hand and foot, I put myself under your protection. If you do forsake me, let your name and your progeny be damned forever, in this world and in the everafter.

Then, weary or simulating exhaustion, he closed his eyes again, while the assistance started derisively laughing at this daring appeal to a prevailing custom.

You well know, you son of a dog, that there is no protection for the rumi's servants.

However, Hussa sat upright and in a flourish, he lifted the flap end of his burnous that covered his rifle and sprung up to the Djema'a, saying:

- *Who spoke thus? Who dares pronounce a judgment on my honor and dictate my conduct? And who thinks he has the right, alone, to set himself up as guardian of our customs? I say that this man is henceforth under my protection in pursuance of the very custom that you invoked without really knowing it. I do swear by he who has created these mountains and plains that as long as I live no one will lay a hand on this man.*

Then, without hesitating a moment, he turned to his protégé, untied him with the help of his relatives who had rushed to his side and carried him to his tent, while the surprised but overcome crowd moved slowly away to the amghar's tent, making different comments about the incident.

This caused the prisoner a boundless joy. A sheep was stuck immediately in his honour, which attracted to the tent a crowd of admirers of the man who had proved to be so full of grit

The Djema'a itself, which was duly invited for the occasion and quite happy to bring the incident to an end in an honorable way, partook in the feasting. It thus sanctified Hussa's view concerning the interpretation of the custom.

Everybody then gave his own opinion as to the best care and treatment to be given to the wounded man who had become a poor victim of the rumi and who was now sincerely pitied.

Eventually, when they finished the meal, it was decided, to the great delight of Raho who was indolently lying on the most beautiful carpets of the tent, that a woman, in fact Hussa U Mhend's own aunt, would be there and then dispatched to the French hakem to tell him about the offer of release of his mokhazni against a ransom of ten thousand duros.⁽¹⁾

The selected messenger took good care to see the captive before leaving the duwar. She wanted as she said, to ask him for information about the way to present herself at the post and to make sure that she would not be retained as a captive. Raho reassured her, saying:

- *You can go mother and don't you worry. Among the rumis a woman is never badly treated, in fact no more than a man. You are taking news which will please everybody and gratify my family. Do tell everybody, you see, that I am very well looked after and that I am treated with a lot of consideration. But do insist on them to speed up my release at all costs. Tell them to sell all*

(1) A Moroccan duro was worth between five and eight French francs, according to prevailing exchange rates.

my possessions to make up the full amount that is required. Let my wife borrow if necessary and I will pay off the creditors with the sale of one of the land plots I own in the Zemur country. As to the Captain, do tell him that I ask his forgiveness for the mistake I made and that I put my children under his protection during my absence.

Then, the old woman left in the dark night, accompanied for a few hundred meters by her nephew while in the duwar, everybody returned to his own tent, thinking that 200 duros per warrior was a fine enough sum and that definitely, there were good sides to the war !.

Chapter V : Towards Freedom

As expected, the old Rqia, that is the name of the messenger, was not unknown at the post where she had often passed on information on behalf of her nephew. Therefore, when the Shawush received her around midday, and when he learned about her mission, she was spared no marks of consideration. Raho's wife and his children welcomed her, as would be expected, with special signs of joy. And, if sugar, tea and meat could have any effect on a Berber's stomach, the quantities consumed that day by the messenger from the mountain should have killed her on the spot.

However, in this country where nature is still alone in fighting against the disorders of the human body, the former is still able to fairly well withstand such over-indulgence. Indeed, Rqia felt most comfortable when she delivered her speech to Captain Alain when she was ushered into his office.

- Raho is still alive, but he was cruelly tortured yesterday. Had my nephew not come to his rescue out of regard for your kindness towards his son, he would be dead by now. This shows, oh man that a kind deed is never wasted whatever may be said. Now is the time for you to get your friend out of this fix, and you must do it quickly...

- I'm most ready to do so.

- The reason for this is that the other tribes and Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi could take a hand in the matter and then, it would be very difficult for my nephew to hold out against their demands without he himself running great risks. However, Hussa U Mhend thinks that a ransom of ten thousand duros is rather exaggerated. If you did pay this amount, the insurgents would be interested in nothing but catching more prisoners. You must offer no more than 400 duros maximum, of which 300 for the authors of the catch and 100 for the Djema'a which you'd better get involved in the matter. While waiting for this amount to be settled, Raho will remain under our protection and you well know that our fraction which numbers 150 rifles will break ties with my brave nephew only if it really cannot do otherwise.

Listening to the old woman's advice, the Captain could not but rejoice.

Thus, Husa U Mhend, whom he had unfairly let down, but whose son he had welcomed, could recall only his act of kindness and had no hesitation in exposing his own life for the sake of one of his auxiliaries who was a prisoner. Not only did he guarantee full protection, and without reservation, to the captive, but he also spontaneously offered to make the insurgents accept a petty ransom instead of siding with the warriors of his own tribe. This was wonderful.

However, the officer took good care not to show his satisfaction too much, which would have been considered by the insurgents as yet another sign of weakness. He, therefore, merely expressed his gratitude to the messenger for the trouble she had taken by coming to the post:

- As to Husa, do tell him that I will never forget what he has done, that I will record this in the archives of the bureau so that my successors know about it later. Tell him also that what he suggests is very sensible indeed. I am, therefore, ready to pay 400 duros, under the condition that the matter is not left to drag on and that the prisoner is delivered to us within three days at the most. As to Raho, tell him that he is forgiven and that he should not worry about his family. In fact, his wife, whom you are going to see, will herself tell you that they lack nothing and that her children are in good health.

Having said that, he took the money in hassani⁽¹⁾ from his safe and handed it to the old woman:

- Here you are nice Rqia, 10 duros for you and 20 for your nephew who must now be ruining himself for a mokhazni. You will also be supplied with everything you can carry in sugar and tea for Raho. Then, you may go...

Rqia took the money, slowly counted the nice white coins which she tightly knotted in the flap end of her izar⁽²⁾, then she looked at the Shawush and the officer in turn, reluctant to leave the office :

- What more do you want ? asked Lahsen

- Son, I forgot to tell the hakem something important and I'm not sure whether it is not too late. What I have to say is on behalf of my nephew.

- Speak then, mother. There is nothing to be afraid of here.

(1) Moroccan silver currency, dating back to Mulay El Hassan.

(2) Long piece of cloth used as top wear by rural women

- In that case, this is what I have to say : my nephew has charged me to warn the Captain and tell him that Ishqern, last Monday, agreed to 'eat' you . The Dir horsemen are planning to gather in two or three days, four at the most, half of them in El Qebab and half in Tinteghallin, because of problems of accommodation and cost. They will launch an assault on one of the posts which has not yet been named. My nephew says that they have taken these decisions only because you have been too kind to them this winter and have shown so much naivety. They think you have become weak and ripe for a crushing defeat.

- Let them come then...

- They will come oh Lahsen my son, more especially as there were so few of you at the Aqissari yesterday.

- Nevertheless, we proved grave-diggers for the brave Ishqern, which, at least in my opinion, is not a sign of our weakness.

- That is true. But, you very well know that we are used to distorting facts quickly and, because you have failed to retake the captured mokhazni, the harka considers itself victor. In any way, my nephew is of the opinion that the only way for you to avoid more serious trouble is to attack the flocks which still come nearby, next to the Zawiya. Now, it is up to you to decide. It is taken for granted that my nephew's livestock is among that of the tribe and if they were to be captured, he trusts that you will return his .

Captain Alain smiled at this new suggestion:

- All right, that is agreed. I will stand on my guard. Concerning the raid on the flocks, it is neither 'yes' nor 'no'. In any case, this is the end of the winter, the weather is still not good enough and the soil is not solid for the cavalry. Tell Hussa that the most important for the moment is to have Raho returned to me safe and sound.

He, then, left the room where the old woman went on badgering the Shawush.

- Come on Lahsen, how can you tolerate, with all the power you have here, that the Ait Ishaq should bring their flocks to graze so near the post and at the same time conspire to make war to you? Have you forgotten that among our people, power is measured by the number of strikes, not threats? What's happening here? Have you been turned into women, you Bu'azza's mokhaznis who were dreaded by everybody not long ago? Don't you know that you have

become an object of derision in ahydus⁽¹⁾ and that it is said that what you have as armament is mere hemlock sticks?

Lahsen got into a rage but then managed to keep down his temper:

- Come now mother Rqia, there is no hurry. All these things, you see, always come in due time. As to those who insult us, they do it from so afar that we cannot hear them, so we don't really care. But do take my word for it, and I'm a well informed man. Whether it be tomorrow, in six months or in three years, the mountains that you can see yonder and where you live like jackals will, one by one, be covered with white turbans (meaning French posts) and all your notables who are today trying to be smart will have to kiss my hand and fill it before they are allowed to see the man you have just seen. Now, this said, go and look after Raho, give Hussa my kind regards and tell him that he has done well. And most of all, don't let yourself be devoured by the wild beasts.

Rqia, who was far from being convinced, finally set out for her tribe again, loaded with six sugar loaves of two kilos each and half a pound of tea, all given to her by the Shawush. She also carried three small packets which Raho's wife asked her to deliver to her husband.

Laboriously, but full of joy at the thought that her nephew would now be triumphant among the insurgents, as well as among the rumis, she walked for three hours.

When she got to within a few hundred meters of the duwar, she drew close to the trunk of a tree which was partly hollow and which was lying on the ground, and hid her precious load which she thought should not be seen by everybody.

Then, walking in lighter footsteps, she joined her people. But, she was greatly surprised to find that the number of horses tethered next to the tents of the fraction had increased tenfold, and that a number of richly dressed strangers were talking in groups in the duwars. Even more surprising was the fact that her nephew's tent, where the prisoner was supposed to be, was surrounded by a noisy crowd. What was going on? In fact, it was as simple as this: because of the spread of the news concerning the engagement that took place the day before, all the notables of the Dir tribes had come to be informed about the event. Muha Ashqir, the war amghar of the confederation, had himself taken the trouble to come, and the biggest crowd surrounded him.

(1) Berber dance

That distinguished person wanted to see the prisoner and to know what the fraction intended to do with him. Besides, he very much hoped, as he had already told everybody, that the kafer billah (infidel) would be put to death without further ado.

However, the Ait Ishaq and Ait Ahmed U 'Ayssa, all members of the coalition formed at El Qebab, had arrived at the same time, and they expected indeed that the captive would be sold to them, so that they could exchange him against their brothers who were detained at the Zawiya post.

Besides, Hussa U Mhend having claimed, with the assent of his own people, that the captive under his protection should be neither put to death nor ill-treated, there ensued a heated discussion which almost started a real fight.

Eventually, as neither the war amghar nor the neighboring tribes had managed to ease the selfish attitude of Ait Yaqub U 'Ayssa on the matter, the notables felt offended and left the meeting, proffering threats.

Rqia was then ushered in to the Djema'a of her tribe, after she had been severely reprimanded by Hussa U Mhend.

- I have seen the rumi may God curse him, and he is willing to buy back the prisoner. However, he thinks that 400 duros is a maximum that he will, on no account, go beyond. He even made it clear that 100 duros of the amount would be handed by himself or by his emissary to the members of the Djema'a. He was even impudent enough to add that if his Raho were to suffer any kind of ill-treatment, he would immediately put to the torture all the Ait Ishaq and Ait Ahmed U 'Ayssa prisoners. He also threatened to execute all our brothers and put their heads to dry on the post if the captive is put to death. I do think he will do as he says for he seemed wicked and ferocious. They did not even offer me a glass of tea! And then, oh my brothers, beware of him. I did see that he was surrounded by a great number of horsemen.

- A notable : Did he allude to the alliance that has been concluded by the Dir tribes ?

- Rqia : I myself told him about it, but he replied that he did not care, that he would go on building houses and welcoming all those who would go to see him, but that if ever he was attacked, he would burn our duwars. Of course, he overestimates his strength, about which I made a point of standing up to him as I had the aman. But, with devilish people like him who feed on 'tabagha', and who hold forth incomprehensible speeches to wooden small round discs and strings, we must be careful.

In any case, if I were you, I would as quickly as possible get rid of this dying man who stinks like a pig, or I would finish him off and would go away and live up in the mountains. The rumi wants his man within three days...

Rqia then took her worn out shoes which she had left at the door of the tent and, mumbling invocations to all the saints of the region, she withdrew.

- The harka amghar: *Well then brothers, that's that. We now know where we stand. Obviously, the amount offered by the rumi is not enough and we should insist on getting more, but our enemy being a man who will most certainly wreak vengeance on his Muslim captives, I would suggest that we accept his offer. Besides, the war is only at its beginning and we will make other catches, much more important, God willing. I would now like to ask members of the harka to say whether they approve of my suggestion.*

- Notable Bennaser : *I am not sure I look at the matter in the same way as you do, and I refuse to be part of this deal. When we make war against the rumi who has invaded our land and who is preparing to go even further, there should be neither forgiveness nor mercy. There is only death for him or for us when time has come, and even more so for those among our brothers who have turned into auxiliaries of our enemy. Can you amghar, and all of you who are listening to me, imagine that had it not been for the Zayan partisans and the mokhaznis, we would be able to move about with our flocks, between all the French posts, without meeting a living soul, given that the garrisons are so weak? Can you imagine that it is thanks to the felony of our brothers that the rumi is able to supply himself with the wheat, barley, wood, straw and meat that he needs?*

Finally, have you forgotten that each of our enemies has taken a wife among our virgins and that our blood is gradually degenerating day by day. Of course you have! You have forgotten about all this. You don't worry about any of this because the glittering money has blinded you and because for you, six duros are worth more than 'the red of honor'⁽¹⁾ on your forehead. I am of the opinion that we should put the prisoner to death and, were I not restrained by the respect I owe the tent of one of the best men amongst us, I swear to God that I would eat part of his panting heart hither, before your very eyes

- Hussa U Mhend : *Our brother speaks well and his wisdom is unrivalled. But he is wrong, greatly wrong indeed in that he realized a little too late all*

(1) In Berberland, one is meant to go pale under the effect of shame and go red in the face as a sign of honor and joy.

the right things he has just told us. The war most certainly, in particular the war against the rumis and the infidels who serve them, may God destroy them all, can be conceived only by the death of the enemy. But, we must kill our enemies right in the middle of the battle, not under the tents, before women and children. It was yesterday, handsome Bennaser, right at the Bu Tnifest, that you should have caught this man by the hair and cut his throat without pity. It is too late today, he has for him what a hundred generations have bequeathed to us and which we, in turn, will bequeath, God willing, to our children, that is the custom that is as solid as a rock and bright as this steel.

As he was speaking, Hussa in a gesture that clearly showed what he did not dare express, was lovingly fondling the breech of his rifle, which was indeed as glittering as mirror.

- In any case, he added, although I did not take part in your raid, I think that the harka amghar is right and that, since God has saved this man from immediate death, we should not waste a moment and return him to his family.

Consequently, the matter was settled and the Djema'a itself, glad that the Christian had thought about allocating its members a quarter of the ransom, did not raise any objection.

There was indeed a feeling that the Agurram⁽¹⁾ Sidi Muhamed ben Taybi would have ordered and obtained the death of the captive, had he been informed about the matter. But this personality lived at Tihuna, fifty kilometers south, and he had difficulty moving about.

After all, Hussa U Mhend, was a particularly lucky warrior who had so often showered the holy man with shares of interesting catches that he could easily convince him, in case of need.

So, they all agreed to take Raho back to his post on the following day at the time of 'asser (16 hours), and, without further ado, another relative of the protector was dispatched to the French hakem with a letter of acceptance of the deal.

On that very evening, agreement on a settlement of the matter was reached with Captain Alain, and all dispositions were taken by both sides concerning the meeting they had decided to hold.

(1).Famous religious personality, plural igurramen

Chapter VI : The Heart of the Matter

Ever since the assassination of Captain Taillade, commander of Sidi Lamin bureau, by Mi'ami Uld El Fassia his so-called friend, the officers of his district had not been allowed to agree to hold a meeting with the insurgents outside the walls of the post. Moreover, the crime had been perpetrated in particularly revolting conditions and the high rank of the assassin amply justified the instructions that had been issued in this respect. Thus, when Captain Alain received the letter, his first thought was to delegate his Shawush to the unsubdued Djema'a, as he was certain that his intelligent auxiliary, known and respected for his warring exploits, would accomplish his mission in the most adequate way. However, he soon gave up this idea. Here was an invaluable opportunity for him to see the hostile notables and talk to them and, he thought it was his duty to seize it. People understand and agree with each other, much better when they can meet and see each other, and relationships with the mountain people were due to be more and more frequent. As a matter of fact, there was no similarity between the case of Captain Taillade and his own case. In 1917, the victim trusted the man who had called him from afar and had not been accompanied by a large enough escort. In his own case, he had to deal with declared opponents with whom he could, without offending them, take all the necessary precautions. On the other hand, it was not the insurgents who had a choice as to the place of the meeting but the officer himself. Therefore, there was no danger of a nasty surprise. Finally, a fact that was important enough was that Husa U Mhend was among the opponents and he would not fail to warn him in due time about a potential death trap in case of danger.

Having thus convinced himself of the fact that there was nothing against his getting acquainted with new personalities among the insurgents, Captain Alain reported to his chief about his intention to go and get the prisoner. Then, when the time of the meeting came, he started off with an escort of horsemen.

The members of the Djema'a, about thirty notables, had already arrived at the meeting place. At the officer's request, there were among them not only the harka amghar but also the voluntary protector of the captive.

As to the former, he was still pale and very weak, and he was sitting next to the he-mule that had been lent to him for the journey. He could not hide his happiness at seeing, at last, his comrades and soon his own family.

Captain Alain had the names of the insurgents called out to him as they awkwardly touched their caps as a salute that was meant to be a military one like that of prisoner Raho. Then, everybody sat around the roasted sheep which the foreseeing Shawush had had prepared at the post with the purpose of loosening the tongues of the dirty fellows.

Eventually, when the tea, which follows every feasting, was served and drunk, the officer stood up and, standing on a stone nearby, he invited the insurgents to sit down in a circle around him to talk .

- The Captain : *I'd like, once again, to thank you, oh Imazighen, for your willingness to accept my offer. I also thank more particularly the one who among you has taken the prisoner under his protection and so generously offered him hospitality. I did not expect less from so gallant warriors as you. If one day, fate gets us together again, I will surely remember this. This said, here is the promised money.*

And the officer counted for the insurgents, who cast covetous glances, first thirty heaps of ten duros each which he signaled to the harka amghar to take. Then, he counted ten further heaps which were handed to the eldest member of the Djema'a.

The harka amghar, having counted the duros one by one said:

- *This is the right amount and I do thank you for it. I also thank you for the meal you have just offered us. You surely are a man who knows how to entertain as we were told. Concerning our eagerness to settle this matter, I must tell you that it was not in any way motivated by our desire to please you. You are our enemy and we can harbor only hard feelings towards you. We did hasten because it was in our own interest and we would feel guilty if we led you to believe otherwise.*

- The chairman of the Djema'a : *The harka amghar is right and what he just said is the real truth. We are your enemies and we don't have to please you.*

- Hussa : *Me too, oh rumi, I did not take your mokhazni under my protection to please you. I did it out of respect for our custom and to walk with my head up among my brothers. Moreover, if I have treated him well, to the best of my ability, it was because the laws of the mountain dictate that I should do so.*

- The Captain : *Of course. I very well understand that it was not your kind feelings towards me that led your action in these circumstances. But there are so many tribes that turn up their nose to the laws you have just shown respect*

to. For that, I cannot but commend you on your attitude. Knowing how to bow before the misfortune of a powerful person who has momentarily suffered defeat is not given to everybody. It is a characteristic that befits only noble hearts and, whatever your dispositions may be with respect to me, I will witness everywhere and always that, in this situation, you have behaved as honorable men. Now, let us put this aside and let us talk, if you wish, about the attack that took place the day before yesterday. As a matter of fact, I still find it difficult to understand the reason behind it, for I have never done you harm. Quite the contrary, for six full months now I have been seeing your flocks get near the post everyday, and not once has the idea of a razzia occurred to me. And yet, had it been my intention, one gesture from me would have been enough, for I have men and you know what they are worth.

- The chairman of the Djema'a : This is another issue, oh rumi. You do claim that no harm has come to us from you, but, don't you realize that nobody has brought disgrace upon us more than you have? Your very presence on the Turgilal is a grave and permanent offence to everybody wearing a burnous. It does harm even the bones of our ancestors who sleep at the foot of your post and to whom we cannot even pay our respects on the days stated by our religion, without having to bow before you. Every single day, the voice of our conscience reproaches us with failing to die in our attempt to prevent you from crossing the Seru. We do not, anymore, dare talk about courage before our wives and children. The bread we eat has a bitter taste, as though it had been mixed with common oleander. Every night, we go to sleep thinking about our disgrace. This is the reason why we attacked you, and we will attack you again, God willing, in spite of your canons and machine guns.

- The captain : I do understand that you love your county and that you should fight for it. I do understand that you stick to your religion and to your customs. But, believe me, nobody covets your possessions and nobody is planning to make you change your style of life in any way. Before I settled in the Zawiya, I did tell you by letter that I had not come to take away your land from you, France has much better land, believe me. My purpose was not to persecute you nor to befoul your graves, but to bring you a little peace and more welfare, and teach you how to get the most out of your soil. And, I did manage to settle here on your land despite your courageous resistance because that was the will of God, against which nobody has the right to revolt. As to my canons and my machine guns, you will recognize that I have never used them, except to remind you that you were going astray, when I saw that you were following the wrong path.

And, then, be fair, we don't have only canons and machine guns. There is also wheat and barley which we give to the destitute, there is the knowledgeable and kind doctor who, everyday, saves from death the children and elderly from the tribes which have surrendered, as well as those from your tribes who agree to come for medical advice and treatment.

What do you think I require in exchange for all this? That everybody works and lives on the produce of his effort, without interfering with the person and possessions of others. What disgrace is there in this, particularly when one has fought as gallantly as you yourselves have, before being defeated by a power as mighty as France ?

- The chairman of the Djema'a: We do know, oh rumi, that you are an upright and good man. We also are aware of the praiseworthy manner in which you deal with Muslims whom destiny had led towards you. But, in my turn, I would like to tell you that there is something else you omitted to talk about and which will always prevent us from laying down arms, as long as God has not ordered so. First, there is your religion, which is different from ours, and your customs, which we disapprove of. Then, you seem to forget that we have always been free, and if we happen to side with you, we would not be able to move about without your permission, even to go to the suq of Sidi Lamin. Don't you know that from the top of our mountains, we see everyday long strings of defeated Muslims handling shovels and picks to build houses and roads necessary for your heavy machines. Now, that is disgrace for men who are used to move about in space as freely as the bird you can see over there. When they wake up every morning, they wonder how their hands and arms would be used, but they are certain that they would not do only as they please. You say that you have come to be a source of happiness for us and that you have respect for others' property. But, you seem to forget that we never asked you to do any of this, that we were happy without you, and that we lived without your doctor. You seem to forget that for us, respect for others' property is a matter for the weak and the fearful...Perhaps you are using this prohibition of our undertakings of yester year as an excuse to disarm men that you distrust. As to peace, your peace, forgive us to tell you that we know what its cost has been in human lives to the Zayan who die everyday defending your convoys and supporting your cause. No, you see oh rumi, mixed wheat and corn can give only bad bread. Perhaps you are kind and your strength is undeniable when we think about it, but you are and will remain a foreigner, and, if you want us to be on your side, you must first defeat us. Now, it is getting late and

we have a long way to go. Allow us then to withdraw and forgive us for speaking so frankly to you. This is better than deceiving you. In this way, if one day, as you said earlier, God gathers us unarmed, you will have nothing to reproach us with.

The old man was preparing to stand up, but the Captain held him back with a gesture.

- Wait a moment oh Imazighen, the sun is still high and we have the same distance to go. I am sorry that I have not been able to convince you that God has destined us to become brothers, but I am grateful to you for your straightforwardness today...

- Chairman of Djema'a : We have always been honest...

- The Captain : Are you sure about this ?

- Chairman of Djema'a : When, then, have we deceived you ?

- The Captain : At Sidi Lamin, for example, three years ago, and here also, during the winter. Didn't you promise to give up the fight and enjoy in peace the plain pastures and didn't you break your word?

- Chairman of Djema'a : Can you recognize those who made such a promise in this audience? If you do, then point them out and they will be handed over to you on the spot.

- The Captain : No, I cannot recognize any of them, but the notables who committed themselves on your behalf are your brothers.

- Everybody : Name them then.

- The Captain : I will not name them, for I am not used to giving away those who come to me, even if later they prove unworthy of my trust. In fact, you do know them all.

- Chairman of Djema'a : Well then, allow me to tell you that you are mistaken, for none of the notables was entrusted with the mission of going to see you and we did not need any kind of permission to go down to the plain. You obviously meant your informers, but you know very well that those 'shepherds' live on their lies. Perhaps, you had in mind Sa'id Muha U Haddu who has indeed acted on his own initiative and for himself, without mandate whatsoever.

- The Captain : This may be so. But, instead of 'eating' him as punishment for his good relationship with me, you took advantage of his schemes so much

that you let him act openly with the aim of inducing me to believe, as he in fact told me, that he acted and spoke on your behalf.

- The Chairman of the Djema'a : Yes, indeed, this is all true, but it was fair. When the enemy lacks far-sightedness, it would be stupid on the part of the opponent not to take advantage of it. Besides, the last of your mokhaznis could have told you that for our people, an isolated man never commits his group, unless it is the amghar or some highly respected notable, which is not the case of Sa'id Muha U Haddu.⁽¹⁾

- The Captain: All right, I will not insist and we will fight again if such is your will. I will even wage a tough war against you since you are sensitive only to force. However, whatever temporary misunderstandings may stand between us, I will always remember that, sooner or later, you will be on my side, just like the Zayan people that you mentioned earlier. They don't think that it is a disgrace to be on my side, quite the contrary; they don't think they are less respectable than you are. As to you, always remember, particularly when you happen to be badly off, that the white house that you can see yonder on the Turgilal is yours, that its doors are open day and night to anybody who needs help and assistance, and that you will find there real friendship, not hatred and bitterness. There, you will find honor and also beautiful and various weapons which will make the doors of the country of Ait Sukhman, your enemies, wide open to you. Now, you may go. You are covered by the aman that I granted you up to the ridges of the mountain, and if you happen to hear rifle shots on our side, just proceed in peace, for this evening, I will kill, God willing, only hares and young partridges.

But, the insurgents insisted on seeing the hunting rifle which Captain Alain was carrying. In order to comply with their request, he had to shoot down a crow that was flying over the group while they were watching. Childish cries of admiration could then be heard which Shawush Lahsen, on whom silence was already hung, made a point of accompanying with one of his own comments:

- You see, dear insurgents, that we are clever. I challenge the best among you to do as well. I challenge even your agurram, but then, it is true that this holy man is only good for exhorting you and making you slaughter and eat

(1) A notable who was killed by insurgents about one year after the events related here. That was when he became more earnest and better disposed towards us (the French). It was as he was about to enter the Qsiba post that he was lured away from his tent and his throat was mercilessly cut.

your sheep. Anyway, if you happen to harbor the unfortunate illusion of making war to us, do wait until the shoeing of my horse is done again and till the mud is gone.

These words were welcomed with smiles, but Hussa U Mhend who had 'worked' with the Shawush when this latter was still among the insurgents and did not own even a donkey, retorted:

- What Lahsen, do you mean that you have only one horse now? There was a time when you used to change horses twice a day.

- Indeed, it is disheartening, my dear Hussa and I am almost ashamed of this, but don't worry, before six months have elapsed, your amghar's horse will be mine, unless I take yours...

The whole audience burst out laughing.

Eventually, they all parted with everybody making recommendations of all kinds, for a lot of mountain people had relatives in the pacified zone. Meanwhile, upon a signal from Captain Alain, Shawush Lahsen drew Hussa U Mhend aside, discretely slipping a little bag containing 200 duros into his saddle bag, and saying to him:

- Make sure that the flocks are not moved before eight days have elapsed and your fortune is made. These idiots are hopeless and they need to be taught how to live. Have you heard the amghar's idiotic speech? He will most certainly build the houses, and he will dig out tracks. As though the rumi did not pay the workers he employs... and then, isn't it thanks to the tracks of the rumis that we are able to go from Khenifra to Buja'd without having to reload our mules many times? And, where does he want us to get the workers from? In any case, we must take revenge for Raho for his wounds are still bleeding. It seems that one of the members of the harka wanted to kill him in spite of your protection and that you stoutly put him back in his place. Make sure that his flock, which they say is important, remains with the others. What's the name of this coward?

- Bennaser, but he is not here.

- Does he have children?

- Yes, a boy who is still below riding age.

- Where does he live?

- *With one of his relatives, beyond Ta'anzart. They have only one rifle for the two of them and no watch dog.*

- *Very well, thank you and good bye, for we are being watched.*

Already, Captain Alain was on his horse, whistling up his dogs, with his rifle between his hands. He was impatient to be by himself with his thoughts and to draw the relevant lessons from the meeting. But, he was reluctant to make up his mind while he was still under the effect of the extreme honesty of his opponents and their wonderful pride.

Therefore, after he had given the insurgents enough time to cross the ridges of the mountain beyond which they could regain their freedom of action, he set spurs to his horse and started his hunt.

Being a crack shot and riding a horse of remarkable steadiness, and being the only hunter in the country, he very soon managed to shoot a few pieces of game which he had promised himself to take back.

Then, he broke into a gallop, followed by half a score of horsemen and went back to the post. In the meantime, the rest of the detachment were bringing back the hero of the day, Raho U 'Ali who was already beginning to forget his ordeal and was lavishing his comrades with quaint details about his stay at the *threshold of the grave*.

Chapter VII : Great Oaks from little Acorne Grow

While these events were taking place, there was a great restlessness among the Ait Ishaq in the mountain. The notables who had been sent by the tribe to bring back the prisoner Raho from the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa had come back rather unhappy with the way they had been received. Not only had they been asked to pay a rather exorbitant amount for Raho the prisoner, but their interlocutors had insinuated with forwardness that verges on insolence, that there were still a lot of Rahos in the French posts and that all they had to do was to go and nab them.

Moreover, during the meal that had preceded the discussion, the delegates of the tribe had been offered the least attractive pieces of meat, leaving the best to the people of the duwar. Finally, an unspeakable and unprecedented fact is that the horses had been fed only green grass, and their saddles had not been covered for the night, in conformity with current custom.

In this situation, the Djema'a which had been informed, had decided that it was no more possible to go on fraternizing with a tribe that had so little respect for the customs and rules of hospitality. Its members were waiting only for El Hadj 'Ali, the amghar, to arrive before intimating clearly to the culprits that they would have nothing to do with them anymore.

Some notables had even suggested retorting through staging an immediate attack, and it was because of the fear of displeasing the amghar that they showed restraint and sent for him.

As to El Hadj 'Ali, he himself was going through a crisis of conscience. He had just had a visit from Taybi, the informer of the Christian 'bureau' and the discussion that took place had him really upset. That damned man had brought him a summons to meet the French Hakem.

- And, if you don't come with me, you will have only yourself to blame, the man added. Remember that the rumi is a very powerful man and that if he made the same offer to another notable, he would not hesitate a second. And, instead of leading, you will have to obey, instead of having others work for you, you will have to slave away. As a matter of fact, he wanted to see Hamu U Melluk, but I dissuaded him from the idea because you are my cousin and

because I consider that you are the only one with the ability to command our tribe when the time comes. Aren't you already our amghar? And, after all, a meeting does not commit you to anything, anyway. You can well meet the rumi without making him any promises. In any case, you must make up your mind for he wants me to bring him someone and, if you are unable to see where your interest lies...

- I could, all the same, have you hanged, you son of a dog...

- No, El Hadj, you will not, because the rumi is rich, very rich indeed, because you need money, and finally because we will never have Hamu U Melluk or any of his brothers order you about. And, I may be the son of a dog, but there is a lot I can do for you...

- Well then, damned dog, I am willing to go to the Zawiya, but you must agree with me that making of myself an ally of the hakem, against whom everybody has just leagued and who has just suffered a defeat, would be stupid of me. Just imagine a moment that the rumi whom everybody says has become weak is 'eaten', and that indiscretions are committed concerning my would-be friendly relationship with him, we are done for. No money, no Qaidat, no amgharship and, if my people decide to let me down, which is most likely, no more head on the shoulders of El Hadj, and surely no head on the shoulders of my cousin Taybi ! Thus the rumi must give me evidence that he is still strong by undertaking some action against the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa who have just defeated him. It is only after, that I promise to go and see him if he is not the one who is defeated.

- Let it be so. After all, you are right. I have, in fact, told the hakem that we Berbers like to have friends only among the strong. I, therefore, will pass on your formal promise to him that you will go to see him as soon as he has achieved his first success, even if it is at the expense of your own tribe. Of course, it is understood that the former remains an enemy of the rumi just like other tribes. However, I would very much like to know, for the Captain will be asking me about this, what your own attitude would be in the former case.

- Given that my tribe would have to defend itself, I would not be able to do otherwise but take command of it.

- Suppose the rumi decided to lay into your neighbours Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa?

- Taybi, you're beginning to get on my nerves. God only knows what lies ahead.

As the Djema'a's emissary arrived at the very moment El Hadj was trying to evade giving a definite answer, Taybi was overjoyed at the news he announced.

- In these conditions, he thought, the task of El Hadj has been simplified and we are going to attack Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa without the Ait Ishaq's interference. We could even, if El Hadj does not prove an idiot, have a little fantasia⁽¹⁾ staged between the two tribes. This will suit the purposes of the hakem and will at the same time allow us to give him figures concerning losses as frequent and inexact as they are lucrative.

When the two fellows reached the duwar where the Djema'a was meeting, El Hadj again was given a report on the events and he was asked to give his own view concerning the best course of action.

- Let's stay at home, said the amghar, for if the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa have delivered the prisoner captured at Aqissary to the rumi, there is no guarantee that the matter will remain at that. Even supposing that the hakem agrees personally to forgive the aggression, the mokhaznis will most certainly insist on avenging their comrade who is back among them in the state you saw. Therefore, there is no need to take the initiative of breaking an agreement and be considered as bad Muslims. All we need is to refrain from assisting Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa who have offended us if they are attacked one day.

The Djema'a having sided with this view, and having decided to recommend the same attitude to Ait Ahmed U 'Ayssa whose delegates had been submitted to the same offence as that inflicted on those of the tribe, Taybi decided it useless to wait any longer. He, therefore, went to have something to eat at the amghar's house and, quite happy with the unexpected success he had achieved, he went back to the post, fervently hoping that the Captain would at last accept to dare.

(1) Gun powder show. In this context, the informer is thinking of instigating a war between two tribes.(See Lexicon)



Part Two

Chapter VIII : The Reprisal

Captain Alain had spent most of the night working, given that administrative paperwork has priority everywhere. Then, before taking some rest, he had summoned Shawush Lahsen and sergeants Jilali and Mustapha. While they were having a cup of tea, he had elicited their opinion concerning the events of the week. They all had agreed that, if the affront incurred at Aqissari and the wounds inflicted to Raho U 'Ali were not avenged immediately, the rebels' effrontery would become intolerable, and neither detachments nor isolated individuals would be safe anymore.

- You see, Captain, the Shawush said, with the Berbers, blood begets blood. You may decide to be kind and forgive, you are the master, but the people on the other side will not understand you, no more than we will. And, just as happened last winter, they will ascribe your attitude towards them to your weakness. In any way, what is certain is that if we don't react quickly, we are in for real trouble.

Thus, when Taybi arrived in the morning, he came with an additional argument in favor of action which had already been decided:

We are, the Captain wrote to his chief, forced to initiate an offensive, not only because we have to restore our prestige by demonstrating to the unsubdued elements that we are still strong, but also because we have to anticipate a general assault about which I have no doubts, as attested by the attitude of Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa whom I saw only yesterday. For, although the last affair was no more than a passing incident for the Berbers, this event was well suited to fire their spirits, and in spite of the fact that they left two dead on the battlefield, they can still pride themselves about having captured, tortured and then sold a mokhazni to us, thus dealing on an equal footing with us. In any case, we are now in a propitious position to inflict on the enemies a defeat, severe enough to break up, I hope, their alliance and rally to us an influential worthy man among them. El Hadj 'Ali, whom I was honored to tell you about in a previous correspondence, has, as a matter of fact, set down as a condition for initiating negotiations, a prior victory over the Dir people on our part. We may, as of now, consider as totally isolated, the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa who have been guilty of offending the war amghar of the confederation

and seriously displeasing both the Ait Ishaq and Ait Ahmed U 'Ayssa. We are aware of their warring merit, but, in case of attack by surprise, they cannot count on more than the five hundred rifles of all models that make up their armament and that of Ait Ben Haddu who are presently their hosts at the foot of the Buyghsayene. Moreover, as the flocks are now coming back close to our fortifications and to the east tower of our post, I am able to accurately count their herdsmen.

Therefore, I intend, with the permission you have granted, to launch an assault tomorrow, Saturday, which happens to be the day when the Ait Ishaq are attracted to their suq of Kheddi, more than thirty kilometers west of the site of the projected action. I request that Bu'azza Uld Muha U Hamu, chief of the Khenifra Makhzen, of the Zayan partisans, meet up with me on the Aqissari today at 12:30 so that we proceed from there to reach the heights of Bu Tnifest from which we can easily survey the area where we will work out the details of the operation. I'd like the five hundred horsemen from Khenifra to leave this post only at the last minute, and only upon my request.

At 11 a.m., having received a telephone call confirming that his plan had been approved and that Bu'azza Uld Muha U Hamu would be at the meeting place at the set time, the officer had a quick lunch. He kitted himself out as if on a hunting party, and, followed by his usual escort of six horsemen and his main subordinates, he set out towards the Aqissari. Bu'azza, who got there before him, was busy hunting. You could hear from a distance the shots of his rifle and the loud barks of his slughis.⁽¹⁾

When the two groups met, their chiefs, who were united by genuine affection, embraced each other. Then, they proceeded with putting off track the rebels who could be hiding in the thickets of the neighborhood, and everybody set out towards the Djebel Bu Tnifest in a formation which was responsible for insuring the safety of the whole detachment without, however, depriving it of the peaceful appearance it was supposed to assume. The dogs, whose barks could alert the enemy, were left by the Seru River with the horsemen.

When they reached the rocks dominating the area, the horsemen dismounted on the friendly slopes. Then, the Captain, Bu'azza and the non-commissioned officers of both posts, all equipped with binoculars, crawled towards large tufts of mastic tree where they started their observation round in pairs.

(1) Greyhounds

The sight before their eyes, then, was most comforting. The plain, which was hardly six kilometers away, swarmed with animals: oxen, sheep, goats, horses, mares and donkeys; and so were the first slopes of the Dir to which duwars clang, in impressive black circles. However, it was obvious that there were more animals between Sidi Bu ‘Ali and the Ait Ishaq Zawiya than anywhere else. Saddled horses were pegged in each duwar, as usual, but guard stations were far fewer. Each of the posts contained no more than three or four men who seemed more concerned with cooking *tiboubaline*⁽¹⁾, of which people are so fond, than with fulfilling their guard duty. In the plain, at the foot of the first slopes, you could clearly distinguish the two tents of Bennaser, a location that was of particular interest to the vindictive Lahsen U ‘Ali.

Eventually, as Bu’azza Uld Muha U Hamu declared to the officer, the situation looked exceptionally favorable:

- Captain, *I think we can, with restraint and moderation capture all the guards and about three hundred heads of cattle. To do this, we will have to cut directly by the two tents which you can see over there and then cut across towards the right, taking everything on our way. The engagement should not take more than two hours, which will not be enough for El Qebab people to intervene. I would, therefore, like to suggest that we proceed as follows: that we meet up with the Khenifra horsemen on the Aqissari at midnight and then direct them to the gully by the two isolated tents where they will have to wait in ambush before sunrise. At the same time, we will send fifty Zawiya horsemen to the Buyghiden peg, to serve as a reserve and fall back position and contain, if the need arises, the Ait Ishaq who might very well decide to get involved, in spite of Taybi’s reassurance and the fact that their suq is far away – This group, which will have to bear most of the final ‘barud’,⁽²⁾ must carry three cartridge boxes for its own ammunition supply and ours.*

- *That’s all right, the Captain answered. Like you, I do trust that the operation as you have described it will go right. We will, therefore, communicate these dispositions to the officers and go back.*

- *No, Captain. I do beg you. Let’s not disclose any of this to the Shawush for the moment. Why should they know? Obviously, they are trustworthy men, but their wives are so talkative and the mountain is so near. Let us, then, go back quickly, hunting on our way, and notify Khenifra. Let us enjoy a nice hare*

(1) Ears that grow on fennel stems, believed to have aphrodisiac properties.

(2) Fight

and get a little sleep. We will inform our men upon leaving the post with them. Besides, you can see for yourself that they are the kind of people who can understand that we should take time to think before making decisions.

Not taking offence at the lesson of cautiousness given to him by his valorous friend, a lesson that was after all deserved, Captain Alain gave the withdrawal signal and they all went back to the Turgilal after Bu'azza had assigned two of his officers to the Aqissari with the mission of arresting all people coming from Khenifra by night until his return.

At the post, where the arrival of Bu'azza, who was famous for his knack at organizing smash-and-grab attacks, there was a sign that something important was in store, people were only half asleep, hoping the order they had all been looking forward to was imminent.

In the mokhaznis' tents and in the goumiers' shelters, groups of men talked around couscous⁽¹⁾ plates and hot mint tea cups, while the officers were cracking a bottle of champagne in their canteen, in honor of the young chief Lieutenant Bu'azza.⁽²⁾

In the stables, as though some mysterious order had been circulated, the horses had received a generous ration of barley, and you could hear only munching and happy pawing noises.

At the same time, on the track from Khenifra, a long procession of horsemen moved towards the Aqissari. There were blue mokhazni burnouses, and a majority of white partisan ones. Silence was total, and even the horses, which seemed to abide by some order, refrained from neighing. From time to time, a bat would fly over the procession, swift and astounded, in a silky rustle. Meanwhile, indifferent toads chattered in the nearby swamp. The Shawush, who had temporarily been entrusted with the tremendous task of commandment of the troops, acted in a self-important way and stood majestically and proudly on top of prominent positions, surveying their filing cohorts.

Among these men who aspired to glory and went to death voluntarily, with the sole ambition of pleasing their chief Bu'azza and the French officer, there were only Moroccans, some subdued only the day before. There was Ba'adi,

(1) Semolina converted into tiny grains and steam-cooked. National dish in North Africa.

(2) It was known that nothing could be more pleasing to Bu'azza Uld Muha U Hamu than this title that made him feel closer to the officers with whom he worked.

Mulay Idriss, Lebsir, Lahsen, all sons of the lost Zayan chief, brothers of Hassan the Pasha, of Amhroq his deputy. They were sons and brothers of the man who was at the neighboring post, waiting to add yet another glorious page for the sake of France. There were also Shawush Muhamed Ushart and Hamu Abuhsus, the two Ahizun (lame men) who had each lost one leg somewhere, and who continued fighting in spite of their disability, just because they had not had time to learn to do something else.

You could also see Mulay Ahmed Uld Bujema'a who was one of Muha U Hamu's men, Muha U Shrif who was enemy to the latter chief but who was now serving his sons, Embarek U Gahi who had refused to be Qaid of his tribe, so that he could stay in the shadow of Bu'azza, his idol. Bennaser N'Hamu who was also there, aspired only to participate in sorties, because as a young man of means, he considered it improper to be excluded. Finally, there was a crowd of anonymous heroes whose names will never be known and who, nevertheless, have written with their blood on Zayan and Ishqern battlefields their gratitude to what France had brought to them in terms of justice and hope.

However, it was now midnight, and, in conformity with prior dispositions, the Turgilal horsemen had been mobilized and Bu'azza had joined his group. The two detachments were now proceeding to their ambush positions. Captain Alain was at the head of the fallback group, seconded by his own officers. Then, one by one, groping along in the hostile but also friendly darkness, the warriors crossed the ravines and climbed up the mountains, always avoiding pathways that were familiar to the unsubdued prowlers, and observing a dead silence despite falls and occasional annoying jerks.

Eventually, around three, the groups managed to reach and plunge into their holes for a welcome sleep. In the meantime, at the nearby enemy's encampment, the dogs furiously barked for no obvious reason. Only two completely naked men mounted guard above each group, flat on the cold ground and merged with it.

Still, the hours elapsed, one by one. The sun had already set and Muhamed U Shart, the only smoker among the honorable Djema'a as he would say, had already smoked twenty cigarettes of which his burnous had concealed the flow and dissipated the treacherous smoke. The tea bottles had all been emptied, but the pancakes had not been touched, for a wise warrior never indulges in eating before the fight because of the potential abdomen wounds which, as the saying goes in the country, are harmless for he who has an empty stomach.

Now, each on his side, the Captain and Bu'azza, respectively flanked by Shawush Lahsen and Shawush Muhamed U Shart, and all clad in muddy kaki, acted as sentinels.

Before their rather amused eyes, the duwars started awakening, the tents opening with their bluish smoke, and the cows and goats with milk-filled udders escaping from the cattle pens. Meanwhile, the lambs and calves, at last untied, were running right and left in search for their mothers and the feed. Only the dogs went on sleeping between the tent pegs, overcome by tiredness and growling at an imaginary enemy through habit with their bare and menacing fangs.

At 10 o'clock, the sun had overcome the dew, which is so fatal to cattle, and a first herd of sheep left the duwar. The whitish spot formed by the herd on the red earth lengthened, shortened and grew round, following the grass and the whims of the shepherd, a very little boy of about ten, with a long knotty stick. Then, other flocks followed, including all kinds of animals, walking at the same lazy pace and led by little boys, little girls, even old men already bent with age but whom destiny had doomed to toil forever. In the distance, behind this bellowing and bleating sea, which caused a cacophony that delighted the hearts of the mokhaznis lying in wait, groups of horsemen appeared, somewhat speeding up in order to get ahead of the flocks. Bu'azza could count six groups and the Captain four others, each including three or four warriors. They proceeded towards their guard positions, heedless of any danger. They went at full gallop, they stopped to sing and fondle the eleven year old neighbour's daughter whose head was already adorned with a gorgeous crown of wild flowers from the fields.

At last, the watches said 2 o'clock and the enemy sentinels were at their positions which they had carefully searched before dismounting. All around our men who were getting impatient, a multitude of fires were lit beside which little girls moved about, already bowing under the authority of their young companions. They were trying to roast a hare that had been killed with a stick, a sparrow captured with birdlime or delicious tiboubalin which they named only with a blush, as though they already knew... Some old women who were also there, bent over their tiny spuds and, searching for precious roots, could at any moment reach the ambush positions and raise the alarm. Then, Bu'azza Uld Muha U Hamu, having made sure that the sun was with him at this hour and that it was going to blind the enemy gunmen who all came from the East, slowly crawled towards his horsemen. He ordered them to get on their horses

and, standing on his stirrups, with sleeves rolled up, and glazing eyes, he took off on his horse and crossed the protecting talus at top speed, followed by a turbulent whirlwind. In a flash, he had reached the foot of the mountain, shaking off a multitude of brave men, some of whom had been assigned in advance to move the flocks towards Captain Alain who was ready to receive and protect them, while the others fought alongside him. The plain milled about with people and animals thrown into a panic and the ridges were gradually lit with alarm fires on all the peaks. Men in burnouses bustled about, desperately calling for help. At the same time, three blue horsemen who had received instructions from Shawush Lahsen, just in case of necessity, quickly crossed the fixed line and, deliberately, as though not in a hurry in this storm, they set fire to the tents of Bennaser whom they took back before he even had time to get on his horse.

Then, behind the huge column of captured cattle and prisoners, which moved to the French post under the protection of a guard that was at risk of being chopped, the battle, real one started, desperate and relentless. All the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa and all the Ait Bu Haddu were there, but they were alone, and they realised how powerless they were against this dreaded phalanx that showered them with insults, flouted them and spat out death while moving away behind its catch. As for the Inzinateen of El Qebab and Ait Ishaq, those cursed Jews who had scheduled their suq day on Saturday, they gazed from the top of their mountains perhaps with delight, at the disaster that had been inflicted on the brave tribes of the plain. Then, hope for any kind of assistance was lost, and victory would go to the rumi. It was necessary to save the people's honor and preserve the right to speak up the next day. Then, there were successive charges, hand to hand brisk fights, wild and cruel, and in all corners, revolving movements. The enemy attempted to encircle our men and shoot at them from behind, in order to create disorder and, at least, recover its prisoners. But, Captain Alain was there, with his horsemen, of whom fiery Lahsen, who made comments about the way the fight was being carried out, while waiting for his turn to charge at last. Then, leaving half of his men on the position which was the least safe to evacuate too early, the officer hurtled down the slope, staying clear of Ait Ishaq territory where perplexed pedestrians had already appeared. This charge was such that, Muha Uld Hamu had later said, he had never seen one so fine. The officer had toppled over and swept, as though under a huge rake, the most audacious among the unsubdued who had already started shouting with joy. Horsemen fell with their hands clenched on their weapons. The horses reared up under their stinging wounds and

collapsed. Shawush Lahsen had already changed mounts twice, sending to their mothers the most timorous among the mokhaznis. Men from both sides abused each other across the peaks, among the humming of shots, as annoying as the buzzing of bees. Then, man to man chases were engaged in all directions, some of which ended in capture and others in death in a ferocious knife fight. Other such chases ended in the thick mud of a pond covered with white narcissuses and where horses struggled, lathering and stuck in the mud.

At last, the exhausted enemies completely fell back, while guns from the post took their turn and went into action, completing their defeat and spreading terror far away into the heights of Sidi Bu 'Ali, as though it was their intention to punish for their cowardice, those who had stood there indifferent.

Then, the gunfire slowly died away and the victors returned to their post, still challenging the bruised mountain with their chants and shouts.

Chapter IX : After the Battle

At the Turgilal post, where the warriors were expected, there was an unprecedented hustle and bustle. Men, women, children and even soldiers who had no more reason to stay at their alarm positions had moved towards the south cutwater where two guns in action stood. They crouched down at the foot of the rammed-clay low wall of the small fort to follow the final stage of the fight. People jostled each other, shouted and cursed each other to get a convenient seat beside the itobdjien (artillerymen) while the shells that were fired at regular intervals rent the air above their heads, and wailed, before they got lost in the scrubby ravines on the other side. Besides, at every firing that swept the neighboring ground with a tremendous blast, hundreds of eyes gazed at the faraway groups of marching enemies, with the hope that a little white fleck would spread panic among the fugitives, knock over their horses and reduce their flesh to powder. But that was a vain hope. Rumbles followed one another, and the mountains roared relentlessly. Although the artillerymen had increased the rate of firing, with gestures resembling those of automats, the white spots in the plain did not, in any way, speed up their retreat. On the contrary, as though they meant to flout the thundering of the rumi's guns, they deliberately slowed down their pace, stopping at every peak to see what was happening. Then, they resumed their uncertain slow march, not at all in a hurry to get to their grieving duwars. The shells, whose fall the spectators at the post watched with interest, exploded far away, in the deep ravines that were swiftly covered with a sea of smoke and dust.

Then, the disappointed crowd started protesting. They wanted to see men collapsing and panic stricken horses fleeing... They wanted to be able to sing the praises of the rumi and his friends, the next day when the unsubdued would show up for talking out. There were, doubtless, relatives among those whose death they wished and whose loss would most certainly hit them cruelly and make them cry, but, it didn't really matter. That was a war, and when you make war, you are bound to kill. Only two old women among the unsubdued had been taken unawares at the post where they had come to see relatives. They stood aloof, quiet and rather anxious, and shuddering in advance at the thought of the news that awaited them in rebel country where they had to return later, if it was God's and the Christian's will.

Eventually, the first friendly horsemen appeared on the Buyghiden plateau, behind the Zawiya. They wore blue burnouses and white gandouras which gave the fields in bloom, under the April sun, an even more cheerful air. You could already hear their joyful shouts and their victory songs. Following them, in compact masses, oxen, sheep and goats covered all the tracks. The surroundings of the fort were deserted, as if by enchantment, and a crazy rush towards the newcomers ensued. Within a few minutes, and despite the thorns and ravines, people joined each other, seeking information and informing each other, complimenting one another, while the cattle gathered on the suq square of the Zawiya, to be counted and shared out. However, these operations were of concern only to the chiefs. As a matter of fact, the rules which governed such operations were so precise that each one was certain to get his fair share. The state will take its share, Bu'azza the valorous chief of the expedition shall be served generously, and the families of the dead, the wounded, the artillerymen, the members of the garrison and the poor will all get their share. Still, there will always remain enough of the booty for the warriors whose only concern at that moment was to enjoy their success.

It was then that, upon a liberating signal from the French chief, the celebrations started. Just as happened during the charge earlier, five hundred horsemen, riding flat out, invaded the area surrounding the post and there, they performed breathtaking fantasias, before the eyes of their wives who let out joyful shrieks, and in front of the Ait Ishaq who, at last, were shyly coming through the heights of Sidi Sa'id. Horsemen galloped in all directions, in tens and fifteens. The horses lathered anew, under their torn flesh caused by the sharp stirrups, and clumsy horsemen fell and then stood up, unharmed. Some of the children who proved too curious were jostled and trampled, but nothing could stop the raging and joyful charges. Groups challenged each other, and you could hear laughter among streams of dust tinged with gold by the setting sun. In the meantime, successive salvos were fired, carrying to the top of the mountains the echo of the famous victory, and close to the springs under the obliging trees, even in the thorny and bushy hedges, virtues foundered drunkenly at the faraway sound of tambourines.

What about the dead, then? Who would dare talk about them in such a delightful moment? No one, of course! Not even the mothers whose sobs had been quietened by a few sheep. In fact, the dead from the post had been buried immediately, perhaps while their bodies were still warm, so that their sight would not spoil the celebrations.

As to the dead among the enemy, they already weighed down the bony mules as they were being moved in shapeless and bloody loads, in search of their faraway family tents.

However, the night had come, and the crackling receded. Now, the harka had settled, forming a huge camp between the two buildings of the post. The horses, still saddled, had been tied to a rope or a picket and the captured animals had been penned up against the Greek merchant's hut. This latter had already started pondering over the debts owed to him by the mokhaznis and calculating with delight and anticipation the income of the evening and the following day.

Next to each group of warriors, a mokhazni who had turned butcher for the occasion, was now out of breath, with a knife between his teeth, over a sheep that he had just slit and which he had to skin and clean out. Another mokhazni, reputed for his skill at making meshwi, kept a wood fire going, whose flame lit up the scene before it gave the required embers. All around them, there were children with covetous eyes, noisily asking for shares of offal that their mothers impatiently awaited, with their bubbling cooking pots. And, under every tent, in every cob-walled small house, young women clad in their best clothes and hands red with henna, had already started dancing and singing quietly, while waiting for their handsome horsemen to deign pay them due attention.

However, let us leave this atmosphere of victory and consider what was going on at the same time among the vanquished of the day. There, the warriors had dispersed immediately, each moving to his black destiny (*essa'd abershan*).

The duwars resounded with moaning, crying and grief, and, as a sign of mourning, the women rolled about in the mud, among shouts and sobs. The distraught men were sadly sitting close to their tents, chin on their knees and hoods on their heads as though they were trying to hide their shame, with a faraway look on their eyes, and ready to cry. As to the children, they were aware of the disaster, but they did not dare utter a word. They tried to keep a low profile and were inconspicuous, to the point of forgetting the little lamb or kid which they so much liked to stroke and adorn with henna but which, they now knew, had been carried away by the upheaval that had taken place earlier. In every duwar, women, young and old, and even little girls who had already been initiated to the mourning rite and ravaged their faces with their tiny hands, were chanting in time the ritual *aguejdur*⁽¹⁾ around the dead bodies

(1) Scene during which the Berber women show their affliction at someone's death. (See Lexicon)

or bloody relics. Others, with hands crossed behind their backs, slowly walked from one tent to another, in endless lamentations, as though they were trying to recall the beloved ones who did not respond.

The mournful silence in the animal pens, which were now empty, exacerbated the general anguish and added a note of pain which compelled pity and gripped hearts. There was no more milk, no more butter, no more meat and yet, people had to receive relatives and friends who would come to offer their condolences. There was no more wool and the fragile tent that had been worn out and even torn to pieces by the winter winds cried for mercy, just as the grandfather and the children were in tatters. Finally, there were no more beasts of burden, and later, they would have to flee, only God knew where to. Then, while the graves were being dug next to the white marabout, people started taking it out on the ill-fated day and on those who proved unable to avoid what had happened. They cursed the neighboring selfish and cowardly tribes and showered with sarcasm the incompetent Djema'a and the tan'imalt war amghar, the jinxed fellow whose victories were worth 400 duros and whose defeats left his brothers with only eyes to weep. As to the tribe's warriors, they were glib talkers; it took fifty of them to defeat a lonely mokhazni and they were unable to defend their homes and families. Let them all be cursed forever!

The poor vanquished bowed their heads even lower, already thinking with anguish about the refuge that they would have to find, faraway from the victorious enemy.

They thought about the field of wheat or barley, the only source of subsistence for the family, that the pitiless strike of a watch could destroy that very evening.

They were ready to rise up against the notables, whom they considered responsible for their misfortune and their shame. By God, why not! They even thought about talking to the mighty rumi whose white little house would shine, yet again, the next day, under the rising sun, more fascinating and more attractive than ever.

Chapter X : Woe to the Vanquished

In the harrowing silence of the end of the night, a long procession of white ghosts and animals slowly moved at the foot of the Qasba of Sidi Bu 'Ali, towards the south. Two horsemen preceded it with rifles in hands and twenty more followed the procession while the other warriors, whose mounts replaced the beasts of burden that had been captured by the French, were lost in the crowd among women and children.

No word was uttered, no shout could be heard and no song was sung among those people who normally loathed silence. However, from time to time, a long sob which could not be smothered expressed a mother's distress or the agony of a wounded man. The young children, perched on docile donkeys, shivered with cold whose biting grew bitter and bitter. Hungry nurslings made their mothers sit on the edge of the pathway and clung to almost dry breasts with their greedy mouths and their taut tiny hands.

And, when an exhausted beast treacherously got rid of its heavy burden, you could hardly perceive the imprecations of the woman responsible for the disaster whose negligence would most certainly be punished by a nearby male.

Each one in the procession walked straight ahead, dismally, and pondering over the sweetness of days bygone and the desolation of days to come.

Before, life was so sweet, with the fat lambs and amusing kids, over the rich pastures and among the always promising crops, that is in a profusion of everything that in Berberland made you speak loud and stand up against all.

Nobody was then worried about the future, knowing that it was assured. People did not indulge in vain calculations, everybody in the duwar delighted to living under the beautiful sun which always rose too early. They let themselves go, thinking only about family celebrations and making them enjoyable and delightful after the harvests following the custom. Already, friends had been informed about planned weddings, circumcisions for the year, and every horseman had made powder provisions for the fantasia. Young and mettlesome horses had been acquired to uphold the reputation of the tribe when the moment came for the horsemen to pit themselves against the neighboring clans in peaceful charges. But now, what was in store for them?

They dreaded to think about the gloomy and dismal future ahead of them. The wealthiest among them would have to sell their horses and weapons to live. As to the planned celebrations, it was obvious that God had decided that they would not take place. Besides, almost all families had been hit by the mourning of the day before. And above all, the tribe's honor had just been seriously compromised as the enemy horsemen had managed to reach the tents, taken captives, and captured and driven away all the group's cattle. It was, therefore, required to speak in a whisper during meetings and, given their status as vanquished and damned, people had to endure, without protest, the law of fractions which had remained strong...

However, at the top of a hill, the group walking at the front suddenly stopped. You could clearly hear the fall of a body, then a long cry of anguish ensued that rent the air *ayoughen*⁽¹⁾. Immediately, while a woman started sobbing in the twilight, a crowd formed around a horse whose saddle was empty and which was held firmly by one of the men, to stop it from moving. At the feet of the animal, a wounded man whose energy had failed him, was giving the death rattle and fiercely struggling with the imminent death. People bustled around him and a fire was lit in the bush nearby and henna was produced from a grimy izar to make plasters, while water hummed in a quickly unhooked kettle. However, all this was no use, for, before the tea that was meant to serve him was ready, the man who was at death's door raised his forefinger towards the sky for the ultimate shahada⁽²⁾. He fervently recommended himself to God: *La ilaha illa llah, Muhammad Rasoulou llah*. (There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger). The tolbas, who served as an intermediary between all these people and Islam, in their turn rushed and, squatting in a rivulet, they recited a prayer for the dead. Then, very slowly, in a final quiver of his whole body, the man sank into mystery, as though he had been put to sleep by the slow rhythm of the redemption song. In the meantime, the women lined up in the narrow path and, facing the piercing sun, they accompanied the dead man's soul with the inescapable *aguejdur*...

Now, daytime had come, which reminded the runaways that they could still be seen from the post that could inflict more deaths with its mighty machines.

(1) Woe to me!

(2) Muslim's pledge to the unity of God. It consists in raising the right index upwards (shahada) towards the sky and at the same time pronouncing the holy formula: *La ilaha illa llah Muhammadun Rasul Allah* (There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet)

So, having securely tied the dead body across the saddle, with ropes and turbans, the group resumed their march, swiftly but painfully. They climbed up more slopes, crossed new mountains and forests, hardly stopping at the springs, in their haste all to feel the safety of nature, the most trustworthy of all friends, thus increasing obstacles between them and the enemy as quickly as possible.

At last, they reached the Tajema't glade with its grayish rocks to be used by the sentinels, and beyond were the welcoming basins and slopes. Quickly, the horsemen spread in search for camping ground. Then, at the drumming of mallets and the neighing of horses, the duwars formed up again, slowly and sadly, while a grave was being dug and the Djema'a gathered to deliberate.

The Djema'a's pride had gone, along with its chat. Its members were now sorry for their crazy venture of Aqissari, which was the cause of all their ills. They had, without a doubt, fought against the enemy and nothing could be more pleasing to God, just as it was obviously the best way to prove to the other tribes the value of the children of Ya'qub U 'Ayssa. However, having hit the enemy, although without being provoked, they should have anticipated its revenge, but they didn't. Now, because of a mistake made by the Djema'a, the tribe was discredited, its children were at the Turgilal, a most ultimate shame. They now could not count on the enemy's pity, which they would not want anyway, nor on the help of the mountain brothers who would shamelessly use it as a bargaining chip. Of course, they could resort to Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi, the agurram of the confederation, but that would be most costly in gifts and all the sacrifices that would entail, with the group being so poor. Besides, that would most certainly antagonize further the rumi and jeopardize the fate of the prisoners, without really overcoming the neighbors' selfishness. As a matter of fact, these latter would not fail to remember the tribe's refusal to deliver prisoner Raho to them.

Thus, there definitely was no way out of their situation, and, in a little while when the tents have been set up, the desperate tribe would pounce on its notables and would call them to account for what happened.

What could they say? That the assault on the Aqissari had been called for by all the warriors of the tribe and not by the Djema'a alone? That after the victory, it was only thanks to the Christian hakem that it had obtained its share of the amount received for the catch? That the defeat of the day before was due mainly to the negligence of the shepherds and to the lack of punch demonstrated by the tribe during the defense? In a word, that in a country with

no masters, each had his share of responsibility in the disaster that had been incurred? Obviously, arguments such as these would be irrefutable for people who had some sense.

However, reasoning with a crowd, a Berber crowd above all, was not easy and the Djema'a knew this better than anyone. The unintelligent crowd is excessive and inordinate in every respect, it is profoundly unfair and irrational in its behavior and despondency. It is delighted by an enterprise in the warm public meetings where it can see only advantages of all kinds that such an enterprise may offer, but it gets frightened by looming difficulties and yields before the slightest sign of defeat.

The crowd is full of admiration for an idol it has just carried to its head after a beautiful harangue or a courageous deed, but it shows no constraint in condemning his first failure and will accept no excuses for such failure. Besides, the crowd is incapable of such a feeling of fairness, as it is indifferent to anything that does not flatter its petty instincts. Thus, the Djema'a had to envisage incurring a rebellion of the tribe and even, as always happened, a split among the fractions of the tribe, which would make the situation even more dangerous. Now, there was only one way of avoiding this looming disaster, that was by blaming the neighbors for the plight that had befallen the group and throwing foreign names to the public opinion. As a matter of fact, the war amghar of the Dir who had been selected among the Imzintaten, had proved his inability as a leader by not taking any precaution against the rumi following the El Qebab meeting. For their part, the Ait Ahmed U 'Ayssa and Ait Ishaq, whose duwars sat on the Dir slopes, had observed the fight the day before with indifference, and had thus demonstrated their cowardliness. Therefore, it appeared that it was an easy task to divert the storm which threatened the tribe, and they were all set to do so, although it was obvious that they would have to pay for maintaining the internal union of the fallacious and useless alliance that had been concluded with the neighbors.

While the Djema'a was busy worrying about its own fate and the future of the group, the sixty duwars of the tribe had settled, following instructions from the other notables.

Now, their dark masses, already surrounded by thorn hedges (afrag) quickly erected by the women, completely covered the east side of the Buyghssayen mountain.

Families formed groupings to better bear the burden of adversity and also to better face the terrifying invasion of *im'azzan*⁽¹⁾. The first among them had already arrived, and, for a few words of condolence, they would eat up the last handfuls of semolina and the last chicken that the family owned.

As to the springs, which were so beautiful earlier, they now were muddy as they had not only been required to produce water, but they had also been stripped off their green livery. All around them, starving men and animals milled about among the meadows and thickets, fighting over roots and grass, turning the earth upside down and bruising beautiful shrubs. Even the neighboring crops had been swept through and their owners rushed to the scene, out of breath, or showered the culprits with vulgar curses from afar.

Here and there, a blue and light smoke filtered through the weft of some of the most opulent looking tents, as a signal that life, after all, was reasserting itself.

Then, all of a sudden, two detonations rang out among sinister cracking and a general bustle spread through the huge encampment. The women started shouting and crying, as usual, before even knowing what was going on. The men flew to their horses and, in the wink of an eye, the whole ridge of the mountain was covered with horsemen, ready to fight. However, the enemy was nowhere to be seen, even the sentinels had not seen anything. They searched the ravines, heaved themselves on to the top of the rocks above and clang to the trees, but all in vain. Even the dogs, who used to take part in all the beats, had to acknowledge defeat with their stomachs right in the sun; they waited for their masters to lead them back to the tents.

Thus, as though he was intent on flouting the crowd, a horseman suddenly appeared from an unexpected hiding place and, proudly standing on his still lathering mount, he harangued those around him as follows:

So, that's it brothers. That's how you manage to lose your battles. Still, I thought you were better than this. It seems that you have been completely changed by the defeat that was inflicted on you yesterday. In any way, here I am amongst you. I have fled from the rumi, may Allah, curse him, and am requesting of you to accept me among you.

Stupefaction was general among the crowd. Not only had 'Ali U Husa, the traitor, the very son of Husa U Mhend, protector of the Aqissari prisoner,

(1) People who have come to express their condolences to the family of a dead person and who must be received with dignity

dared reappear in the tribe after having served the Christian, but he also had the audacity to insult the warriors and to lay on them blame for their defeat. Some immediately suspected him of preceding an enemy detachment, others accused him of coming to steal or get intelligence information so that he could tell the hakem about the new settlement of the tribe. Thus, while some horsemen rushed to the heights of Sidi Bu 'Ali to scan the surrounding area again, the crowd pounced on the enemy and made him dismount and account for his presence among them.

- Do tell us why you are here, you damned dog, or else we will shoot you on the spot. Where are your companions? Where is the detachment? Where is your master?

- What master are you talking about? I have only one that is yours too: There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is his Messenger. What detachment do you mean? There is none. I am all on my own, and I have come to you as a repentant brother. I have left the ranks of the Christian to come back and resume my place among you, for the sight of my uncle Bennaser, now a prisoner of the enemy, and the other captives has made my heart bleed. I did spend the whole night hesitating before making a decision because I was happy, because I had everything I needed and finally because my return amongst you at a time when we know that the invaders will most certainly command this country some day, meant exposing myself to certain death, sooner or later. Eventually, however, my feeling of honor prevailed and I made a resolution to join you. Here I am now, between your hands, with my horse and a weapon that belongs to the Christian. Do as you please with me? If you think relinquishing one's tribe deserves death, I am ready to pay with my life. I have not requested protection from anybody, not even from my father who is among you, and whose bond of protection was imposed on him by God, when our customs did not provide for this. If, on the other hand, you decide that my arm strength and my courage, as well as my knowledge of the art of war and the habits of the rumi can be of use to you, then I will offer them to you. In any way, let me tell you that I have become an 'Amazigh⁽¹⁾ again, just like you, and that yesterday's defeat has affected me as painfully as it has affected you. My only hope now is to draw vengeance of those who have brought sorrow upon my tribe.

(1) Berber

There was a moment of hesitation and murmuring among the crowd. Obviously, they were perplexed and wondering whether they were not, in fact, in the presence of a lost spy, who, if received by the tribe, would not then flee again to the French post and serve as a guide to the enemy in case of a future assault. However, the man looked so sincere, and the prisoners' families were so eager to ask for news of their relatives, that his pardon would be granted soon.

Besides, his return to the tribe was a good thing, given the present circumstances: in a way, it served to rehabilitate the group before its neighbors. Moreover, although he was an Amejjud (one with ringworm), 'Ali U Husa was one of the best warriors of the Dir, and unique son of an honored notable. Therefore, breaking the silence that heavily weighed on the assembly, an old man spoke for granting forgiveness:

- On behalf of all the warriors here assembled and all the others, I welcome you among us, my son. You did bring disgrace upon the tribe by joining, without reason, our enemies, and for this we cursed you. But, now you have come back to us, without ever having killed one of your brothers. You have made up your mind to help us in our revenge, and, that is enough for us to accept that you resume your old position among us. Still, you are aware of our customs, which are wise: we require an 'ahmil⁽¹⁾ who will be accountable for your actions...

- What? An ahmil according to custom? Never. I am neither a Jew, nor a stranger to the tribe. I was born among these rocks, just like you all, and the dead among my relatives are buried with yours. I have come back to you on my own free will; I have left a comfortable life to come to share your destitution. I, therefore, refuse to beg any favor and my rifle is my only guarantor, that is if you accept not to take it away from me. Otherwise, either kill me or let me go and live with another tribe, as an 'anedhlib⁽²⁾, unable to redeem a blood debt.

The old man lost his composure at this brave attitude and the matter was getting more complicated than he expected. Forgiving a traitor to increase by one the number of defenders of the faith was an easy and even a licit thing to do when a guarantor would be accountable for the future actions of the culprit. However, violating the custom to the point of granting an unconditional pardon

1. Guarantor, surety

2. Creditor or debtor in a blood debt affair. The meaning here is debtor who is, according to the custom, expatriated after his crime until the affair is settled in the normal conditions prevailing among the tribe.

was a serious matter that the neighbors would most certainly not accept. In any case, there was there a serious matter for all the notables to debate. Besides, 'Ali U Husa's father was there and he would most probably not fail to pledge his own word in favor of his son.

However, the crowd were more and more drawn towards 'Ali U Husa, particularly the women among them who felt most sensitive to his gallantry and to the whiteness of his clothes, and the relatives of prisoners at the post who were eager to be reassured about the fate of their children. Husa, who knew his son very well, was too aware of the favor that he enjoyed with the hakem and his chief Bu'azza Uld Muha Hamu to believe for one moment that he hated the French and that the new feelings he expressed towards his brothers were genuine. It was obvious that sooner or later, he would return to the subdued zone, leaving it to his ahmil, whoever that way be, to settle the matter with the Djema'a...Hence, it was clear that the only case where there was a possibility of interfering in his favor, a most unlikely one, was if his own life was threatened.

- Don't be surprised, brothers, that I don't propose to act as guarantor for my son. He told you himself that he claims responsibility for his actions and I do entirely approve of this. When a man comes back to Islam in the same conditions as he has, we have no right to doubt his sincerity. Still, even if he does not deserve such trust on our part, there is no reason why I, more than anybody else, should commit myself for him, having broken with him since his flight. And, as you well know, I have nothing to do with him anymore. Thus, you may act with him as you please right now, I do abide by what decision you make and will cut my son's throat with my very hands if you tell me to do so.

At these words, the crowd could not stand anymore and everybody started shouting that carrying on with such a discussion was absurd, that they had to stop it, and that now that one of their sons had come back to his religion, happiness should prevail in the tribe and a celebration of the event should ensue.

Then, without further ado, they all hurled down the slopes towards the duwars, while 'Ali U Husa, now free and delighted, headed a group of horsemen in a frenzied stampede and entered the encampment among rifle shots and you-yous.

Chapter XI - The History of 'Ali U Husa

The interest in the life at the vanguard posts demonstrated by the indigenous affairs officers involved mainly contact that they established and tried to maintain with the dissident and unsubdued tribes.

The main ambition of the Bureau officers, and what was considered as the real glory of the best among them for their chief, was to indulge in attracting the tribes, continuously arguing with them, getting to know them and managing to convince them without bloodshed.

In spite of the excitement it provided, they were tempted by the battle only when it was necessary for maintaining security in their own areas, or when, having exhausted all peaceful arguments, they were obliged to have recourse to war as the only means of persuading their opponents. They, in fact, resorted to it in the highest interest of the progress of the cause. Such a state of mind, which most probably would surprise some of the least initiated among our readers, was a reality, and a few days close to a Bureau on the front would be enough for one to really understand the tendencies for peace that prevailed there.

Such tendencies were first related to instructions from above, which were clear and imperative and, second, to the compelling influence of the severe and tedious nature of life in contact posts.

For the higher command, which was a convinced heir to the colonial methods as illustrated by Field Marshal Lyautey and a host of seconds in command, Berriau, Huot, Henry, Poeymireau, Huré and many more of their kind, the Moroccan must never be considered as an enemy.

At the most, he was a momentary opponent, whom one might have to fight, but whose certain fate was to become an associate, a sincere friend of the French, sooner or later according to the circumstances and abilities of those who had to subdue him. Therefore, violence that served only to perpetuate hatred was to be banished from the action programs whenever possible, and, killing when it was not necessary was considered a crime against the national interest. The individual's honor, his family, his religion and his possessions had to be, in all cases, respected. When retaliation proved imperative, its necessity had to be so obvious that all those who were subjected to it would be the first to recognize that it was fair war.

As to the impact of isolation and idleness, it was, as must be reiterated, obvious and considerable. Besides, one has to imagine the kind of life that the chief of an advanced post endures to understand that things could not be otherwise. He was appointed to command a handful of soldiers and a few mokhaznis, with whom he was shut up within walls, and assigned a mainly defensive mission. He was consumed with a need for intense activity, but condemned to inaction by the emptiness which prevailed around the post. His only concern was to reassure those who fled from him because they knew nothing about his intentions towards them, to draw them close to him and thus establish a command area, that is to create for himself an opportunity to do something useful, rather than just mounting guard behind stones which, most often, were under no serious threat. That being the case, he gave his all to the task and, although he had been duly informed about the disappointing prejudice of the people on the other side, he did his utmost to carry out the task to a successful conclusion. Whenever his informants reported some misunderstanding between dissident tribes, he did his best to make it worse through his emissaries and to convince the weaker party to seek the protection of the guns of his post. Whenever he learned that a notable, hostile to the French cause, was seeking to impose his authority to groups other than his own, he would take all possible steps to make enemies for him. To this effect, he would increase the number of his agents and gratify them with gifts, giving them even more gifts for so-called influential friends who would sometimes not receive them or will even relinquish them. Still, he would show his satisfaction and patience. After all, his informants were not his only means of action, he also had his guns that allowed him to set himself up as master of the surrounding pastures, in fact the most tempting to the unsubdued. He, thus, was able to determine as he wished the people's attendance at encampments and suqs, according to intelligence information that had reached him.

Besides, he had his own horsemen and those of the neighboring posts that he could mobilize upon a mere signal, with the permission of his chiefs, in order to reach the faraway resources of hostile fractions. He could, through a show of force, proclaim that his friendship was worthwhile.

However, every time and in all circumstances, his efforts aimed at one thing only: winning over as many partisans as possible and repopulating the surroundings of his post as soon as possible, not only because he had received instructions to this effect, but because that was for him the best way of coming out of his forced idleness and to cause the birth of a new life in the villages and in the fields that would fall under his future control.

Therefore, one could easily understand why, having led a successful razzia of retaliation, Captain Alain was now eager to quickly reassure those he had just defeated so as to keep them within reach of the action of his peace emissaries.

In order to do so, however, he had not been able to use his informant Taybi or one of his people, for the would-be emissary would have been killed under the effect of anger following the enemy's defeat. Nor had he been able to entrust the mission to a dissident prisoner for his message would have been distorted. He, therefore, had to find a better qualified emissary, more able to carry out the mission without exposing himself to death.

Now, there was, among the civilian indigenous of the duwar, a man called 'Ali U Hussa, nicknamed *Amejjud*, whose loyalty to his bureau chief made of him an ideal candidate for the intended mission. Originally from Ait Bu Haddu, he was related to Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa and the whole of his family was still among the unsubdued and his father, one among the unsubdued, had already saved mokhazni Raho's life. Captain Alain considered that 'Ali U Hussa would not refuse to go into dissidence land with the purpose of reassuring the people of his own tribe and convincing them to stay in the vicinity. As a matter of fact, his relations and the protection he was likely to find among the people of the mountain would most certainly allow him to say everything he wanted to say, without fear, and then come back and regain his due place in the pacified area. Therefore, this was a mission that required only courage and intelligence, and in this respect, 'Ali U Hussa provided all the necessary guaranties.

Actually, the partisan did not hesitate one moment to accept the mission. He was indeed flattered for having been picked out by the post chief, he was only too glad to create new motives for the Captain's benevolence. He carried his good will to the point of reassuring the officer who was worried at the dangers the man would be facing, saying:

- Don't worry about me, Captain. Without a doubt, my status as a subdued is far from being a good reference for my trip among the dissidents, but I do know my brothers and believe me, I will find a way to approach them without any risks.

- And, how are you planning to do that?

- I have no idea at the moment, as I am not yet fixed on the matter, but I will think about it on my way there.

- *When would you like to go?*

- *Immediately, if you allow.*

- *All right, then, we must not waste time. And, make sure that you reiterate to all notables that I have completely forgotten the Ben Khelil matter and that all I want is to live in peace again with all the tribes.*

- *You can count on me, Captain.*

However, when he got back to his tent, ‘Ali U Husa could not help worrying about the difficulties that his mission implied. Showing up among the dissidents as an emissary when he had wholeheartedly embraced the enemy’s cause could not be without danger and, however reassuring he had tried to be to the officer, he knew that he had accepted to face certain death. Of course, his father was among the unsubdued and he himself still had a few friends, in the mountains, but his submission to the Christians had severed all ties with them. Thus, considering that it was impossible for him to carry out such a mission in the conditions agreed upon, he was about to go back to the Captain and tell him or ask to be allowed to have recourse to ruse. However, the idea immediately came to him that there were others who could offer to replace him and succeed in the mission and, helped on by jealousy, he all the same made up his mind to go, even if that meant acting as he pleased, without referring to anyone.

When the captain is no more here to control me, I will act as a Berber would. First, I will take my own weapon, just in case. Then, once there, as I might have to save my skin, I will put on the act of a repentant Muslim. This is a trick that has worked before for others, and that could very well come in handy in my case. Obviously, the officer will not be happy when he knows how I have acted, but as I will have served him appropriately, he most certainly will forgive me. The most important is to succeed.

It was thus that the Ait Ya’qub U ‘Ayssa and the Ben Haddu had recorded the happy event related earlier.

Having been stuffed with meshwi and butter, ‘Ali U Husa was now declaiming under the most beautiful tent of the tribe, before a more and more numerous and attentive audience. Attending were not only the group’s Djema’a but also all tent chiefs and the many notables of Ait Ahmed U ‘Ayssa, Ait Ishaq and Imzinaten.

- To tell you the truth, brothers, I think you have behaved in a most unwise way during the last eight days. When I saw you proceeding with your assault at the Aqissari, I felt really glad and proud, for, in spite of the two dead you left on the battle field, you had taken a prisoner and enhanced the prestige of the tribe. However, when I realized, after a reconnaissance with the cursed rumis at Bu Trifest, that you had failed to keep enough protection for yourselves in your encampments and in your pastures, I felt an endless sorrow, knowing that an attack against you was imminent and that I could not even warn you. During yesterday's battle, your horsemen demonstrated very little punch indeed. I do know how brave you are, and it is not my intention to question this, but I feel compelled to tell you that, if the group that appeared by the end of the engagement from behind the oleander of Ben Kh'Alil, had dared a full charge, you wouldn't have today suffered the loss of prisoners and cattle. You see, during a battle, it is ill-advised to stop during a charge just because a horseman or two fall; you don't take cover behind a ridge when you have, within arm's reach, enemies who are exhausted and whose march is hindered by their catch. You always move ahead, even though just to impress the opponents and spread confusion among their ranks. Still, there is no point in recrimination now, we'd better think about our upcoming misfortunes. What shall we do now?

- What shall we do now? Of course, we should flee and try to make up for our losses somewhere, at Tnarten, for example where we will be at home. As you well know, the rumi whom you have just left is aiming at exterminating us and he will be most certainly take advantage of this opportunity and our present disorganization and shortage of ammunition to finish us off. In fact, this evening, while we were climbing up the mountains, he kept sending his light signals in all directions. It is even possible that his horsemen are already hot on our heels and that they are ready to pounce on the few sheep left to some of us...

- Well, I don't agree with you there, and I think you lose heart too quickly. I believe the reason is that you don't really know the Christian of Turgilal, may God curse him! I will, therefore, let you know how he proceeds and you will understand how unfounded your worries are. You seem to think that his only concern is to wage war against you, which is not true. This is not because he loves you: how can one love people of another faith? It is rather because he has received instructions, from I don't know who among his chiefs of the home front, to do as little harm to the Muslims as possible. Whether

this is due to their intention to deceive you in order to get your submission, I can't say. What is certain, though, is that my former chief had serious difficulties obtaining the support of Bu'azza Uld Muha U Hamu's horsemen for yesterday's engagement. Also, when the engagement was over and when they had had dinner, the same horsemen had gone back to Khenifra, leaving our 'dog' on his own, as weak as ever. Well, then, why should you flee and give him the impression that you are scared of him? Besides, wouldn't withdrawing to Tnarten, which is a good day's walk from the post, mean giving up revenge and liberation of your prisoners? As to the light signals you mentioned earlier, that's a laugh. The rumi is used to sending them every evening to scare off prowlers, for he fears you more than you seem to think, and you would only be playing into his hands if you leave the plain to go to die in the mist and snow of the Muluya. In any way, I most certainly shall not follow you, as I have come back among you only to help you avenge your dead from yesterday. I will, therefore, go and seek refuge with a tribe that is more determined to act.

- 'Ali, you are speaking thus because you don't know anything about our fate. Without doubt, you seem to believe that we are still strong when not one of us has a bag with more than twenty cartridges in it. As to the herds, you well know what happened to them. Our allied tribes have all turned their backs on us. Yesterday, no one offered support, and now that the shame of defeat has struck, we will inspire even less sympathy.

- And, what do you expect to find at Tnarten in terms of friendship? You will be surrounded by the same Imzinaten and the same Ait Ahmed U 'Ayssa who are here, while at the same time getting closer to Ait Yahya whose feelings towards you are well known to you and who will surely attack you as soon as you try to regain possession of your land in the Muluya. As to your means of subsistence, just compare the lovely ears of your fields here with the petty acorns which you will have to do with in the djebel and you will realize the insane nature of your project. Without doubt, the rumi is able to burn your crops, but he will not be so daring if he knows that you are close to him and ready to strike back with an assault on his flocks or against his isolated men. Besides, you are the only ones to know about your shortage of ammunition, the rumi believes that you are still very strong and I do know, through conversations I overheard last night, that the mokhaznis are only too glad that their razzia was a success to have a new and dangerous trial spoil their joy. I would, then, recommend that you stay here, within reach of your prisoners

whom we will liberate at all costs with God's will. However, if in spite of my exhortations you decide to flee and cover all of us with shame once again, you are free and masters of your own destiny.

Having said this, and pretending real discontent, 'Ali U Hussa stood up and swiftly moved towards the tent exit, leaving the Djema'a in a state of extreme perplexity. This speech, whose sincerity was no more questioned by anybody, had produced a profound impression. However, it was obvious that in spite of his undertaking, the fear of a new attack still remained in the mind of a great number of people in his audience. It is not easy in Berberland to conceive that a victory, as striking as the one achieved by the Christian the evening before, could be short-lived anyway. Still, as 'Ali U Hussa had mentioned a new shame and committed himself to liberating the prisoners and avenging the dead, the decision was not to break camp once again before a few young men had checked the reality of the information concerning the return to Khenifra of Bu'azza Uld Muha U Hamu's horsemen. Then, everybody went off to the suq of Tinthehallin, which was hardly a few kilometers away, while the new dissident tried to extricate himself from crowd of relatives of the prisoners who surrounded him again:

- The captives were received and put up last night by Shawush Lahsen U 'Ali and, the rumi who hopes to obtain the tribes's submission thanks to the prisoners, ordered that they be well treated. So, you don't have to fear for the moment that they will be harmed in any way. However, I am saying this again, if we go to Tnarten, their fate would change immediately. They perhaps should not be executed, but the rumi would lose all hope of getting you back to him. He would hold it against you for receiving me and his revenge on the prisoners would be most ferocious. It is, then, in your interest to stay here, or even better to go down back to your encampments, and this in a few days. An even better thing to do would be to send someone to the post today, in order to show the Christian that you are concerned about your own people and that if you have received me, you won't keep me for long. In this way, our poor brothers will suffer less while waiting for their liberation.

- You spoke sensible words, but sending an emissary to the Christian would bring even more discredit on us in the eyes of the others...

- What others are you talking about? Did they think about supporting you yesterday? What?... Would you, despite their cowardly demeanor yesterday,

still concern yourselves with their opinion, although your children's lives are at stake? Honestly, that's not like you, why don't you recover your confidence and understand, once and for all, that no nail will scratch your back better than your own nails! What is more, let's all go to the suq and, if necessary, let's tell our noble neighbors the whole truth.

Chapter XII : Solidarity

Just as happened in El Qebab eight days earlier, Tinteghallin swarmed with people on that sunny Sunday. The houses, of which there weren't many, were jam-packed and all the streets were cluttered. Every footpath had poured out its own contingent in successive human clusters, but contrary to what usually happened, no singing or laughter was to be heard. The Dir tribes called back to reality by the defeat they had suffered, indulged in meditation. They were getting ready to either blame others or to defend themselves later when time had come to establish responsibilities. There were no customers in front of the shops; no one came to get fresh supplies at this small suq which kept some vitality only thanks to the fierce self-esteem of Ait Y'aqub ou 'Ayssa who made a point of keeping their own market just as their neighbors did. However, along every wall, under every fig-tree, at the entry of every cave, groups of men bitterly argued, in their attempt to convince themselves, before they could approach the assembly of notables. As a matter of fact, the latter had not yet gathered, you don't hurry when you have a storm in store. Everybody made comments, but only to his friends, about the two main events of the day: Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa's ruin and 'Ali U Husa's return to his tribe.

In fact, the disaster that struck the neighbors did not really sadden anyone among the strangers to the group. In Berberland, pity stops at the tribe's borders. And, when people demonstrate a generosity in condolence formulae, they are not ready to voluntarily give up a peseta in favor of the new poor. The *tadha*⁽¹⁾ themselves have a tendency to remain indifferent to the fate of their allies when the latter do not expressly beseech their support. Besides, the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa had no real friends in the Dir, having always lived on the margin of the confederation, because of their enmity towards the *Imahzan*⁽²⁾ of Khenifra, themselves friends of Imzinaten and Ait Ishaq. Perhaps they deserved some consideration because of their dispute with the Christian the common enemy, but before they were shown such consideration, it was essential that their attitude was clear and that they would not try to make others shoulder responsibility for their disaster.

(1) Individual bound by a mutual assistance pact (See La Montagne Berbere, Ibid.)

(2) Muha Ou Hamu Zayani's family

As to the traitor's return, this was something about which everybody outside the tribe was skeptical. The Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa, who bore the insulting attribute sons of the rumi, and their friends the Ait Ben Haddu, had a reputation as being treacherous, both as individuals and as a group, such that they deserved no trust whatsoever. And, 'Ali U Husa could well be a secret agent of the Christian? Hadn't his own father already saved the mokhazni at Aqissari, knowing that he was under no formal obligation to do so according to custom?

While the Imzinatin and Ait Ishaq were thus preparing arguments for potential accusations of cowardice that could be leveled against them, following their abstention on the evening before, the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa had assembled at the other end of the village and started consultations about claiming to be victims of the inadequacy of the war amghar of the confederation. Consequently, their neighbors' attitude during the Ben Khelil battle had been unworthy, for the area was so configured that not one shot could be fired in the plain without everybody hearing it in the mountains. Besides, the battle had lasted a whole afternoon and, contrary to usage and stipulations of the El Qebab agreement, not one Imzinatin, nor one Ait Ishaq had shot a bolt for the victims of the aggression, whereas a mere and timely threat from the Awrir or the area of Sidi Sa'id could have totally changed the course of the engagement.

Thus, all people in the defeated clan had made up their minds to shout as loud as they could and expose the war chief as incompetent, along with his brothers, in order to at least preserve the group's honor.

As soon as the crowd had assembled around the Djema'a, verbal assault was vehemently launched at the call of a herald. Let us follow the episodes of the assault, notwithstanding the rather tedious nature of the never-ending discussions that took place, for, as should be reiterated, this was real Berber politics.

- The Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa amghar:

To you brothers who are listening to me, I say that our tribe has been betrayed. We have been attacked and plundered from top to bottom. The fight lasted until sunset and still, despite our formal treaty of El Qebab, no tribe came to our rescue. Now, fifteen of us have gone to their eternal rest at the foot of Sidi Bu 'Ali, eight more with five children among them are subjected to the cruel law of the rumi. In the meantime, our ruined duwars are wandering away, leaving a wounded man at every winding of a track. You have, thus, covered yourselves with shame and are unworthy of the name of Imazighen.

- A noble from the same tribe:

Yes, you have covered yourselves with shame and I do wonder how Muha Ashqir, the cursed amghar, dares appear before us after what happened. Do you know, you man without honour, that wearing nice burnouses and excelling in ahidus dancing is not enough to lead our tribes?

At hearing this most serious insult, Muha Ashqir turned pale and sprang up, followed by all his Imazinaten brothers and then by all members of the audience. He was about to take aim and shoot his offender, but the light hand of one of the notables disarmed him while other white beards intervened between him and his opponents, managing to re-establish peace with difficulty.

- Muha Ashqir:

Oh Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa, I always thought I was a man with a lot to show for it. However, I now realise how forgetful people in our mountains are and particularly among you, tribe of traitors. I will therefore, jog your memory to oblige you. It was my family, oh men without faith, which has always set an example of bravery and trustworthiness to you. Look up and do ask the oleander of the Douna and Lenda rivers how many of your people have trespassed at my very hand and whom you have yet to avenge. As to the ahidus dancers, God only knows where they are recruited from, certainly not from my tribe!

- The amghar of Ait Ya'qoub U 'Ayssa:

You too Muha Ashqir, you seem to be afflicted with a short memory, unless the bravery for which you are so renowned has kept you beside your wives while we were busy fighting against your master Muha U Hamu Zayani and your own people. Still, you should know that here by the Awrir, more than a hundred of your brothers whose graves are still open perished at our own hands. You should also know that, close to Butsiwanin, at the very door step of your duwar, and by your tents, the traitors and cowards you are talking about with so much contempt are the ones who chased your brothers and their allies, like a herd of boars. However, that's not really the question. What we'd like to know is the amount you have been paid to remain in your duwars when the guns and rifles belched forth death at those to whom you had pledged your support and assistance.

Once again, things seemed to be taking a dangerous turn, but as the Djema'a had not moved, taking on a relaxed posture, the looming confrontation did not materialise.

- Muha Ashqir:

What are you talking about? The amount received for our treachery? You wouldn't be asking such a question if you were real men. Anyway, you are only shepherds and I will not demean myself to answering you. As to the amgharship⁽¹⁾ that you bestowed on me, I am giving it up right now and herewith break off our alliance. In this way, we won't need to account for our actions to you anymore.

- The Amghar of Ait Ya'qub Ou 'Ayssa:

As a matter of fact, we didn't expect more from you. We knew very well that you were interested in being amghar only when we didn't have to fight. However, don't you think that by resigning today, following our misfortune that you haven't tried to avenge, you have brought even more shame and dishonour on yourself in the eyes of your brothers?

- Muha Ashqir:

Dishonour? What are you talking about? What is it that I have done that's contrary to custom? As to your misfortune, aren't you the ones who inflicted it on yourselves? How dare you blame it on me when you attacked at Aquissari without permission from the Djema 'a, leaving behind two of your men in the hands of the enemy and eventually selling back a prisoner for 400 duros to a man who, in the end, did not hesitate a moment to destroy you and bring about your ruin? Aren't you the ones who should forever be excluded from the meetings of people of the Dir? However, to even think that you are capable of acting better than you did would be a sign of esteem to you. Besides, you don't really need us if you want to take revenge on the enemy and free your prisoners. In fact, all the ranks of the Christians are made up of subdued individuals among your own brothers. And, if Mustapha U Muhamed and his like are unable to intercede in your favour with their master, Hussa U Mhend served the Christian well enough to obtain freely and without fighting, the freedom of your children...

At this cruel recall of the submission of a fraction of Ait Ben Haddu, of the role that Hussa U Mhend had played in the Aqissari affair, and of the rather suspicious return of his son the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa and the Ait Ben Haddu cut to the quick and, unable to restrain their anger, unleashed an appalling uproar. As though they had been prompted by a spring, they immediately stood

(1) Amghar functions, here meaning war chief.

up and, among deafening vociferations, they loudly voiced their contempt to the other tribes. Even 'Ali U Husa who had not said a word up to then, decided that it was time for him to speak. He sprang up to the Djema'a and, having imposed silence thanks to the curiosity inspired by his audacious intervention, he spat his indignation:

So, this is the union of Muslims that the Christian dreads so much, not only do you hide in your tents while your brothers are being attacked, but you also insult them when they come to you to partake in their revenge. Your dead must be shaking with anger and shame in their graves. It times past, when there were notables worthy of this title, at the head of the tribes, nobody thought about shrinking away from a duty against the enemy. Now, it seems that you don't even know how to die, and your ears seem to have forgotten the sound of the rumi's guns when they ring out in the valleys? Still, you dare speak against the fact that some of our brothers submitted to the French. You even go so far as questioning my father's faith and the sincerity of my repentance. Well, then, let it be so. We will manage without you. The Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa and Ait Bu Haddu will remain as they have always been, the best there is in the Dir. As to me, I do challenge the best among you to come to war against the rumi, headed by their amghar lion...

- Muha Ashqir:

You do speak very well, you rumi. Yet, what you did not remember to say is that if your brothers have been ruined, it's because you served as an informer to their enemies, that you were among those who attacked them yesterday, and that tonight again, you will most probably be at the French post. If, as you just said, there had been a real Djemaa at the head of your tribe, you would be dead by now, and thrown among the rubbish like a 'war eddin' (a man without faith) that you are, like a traitor; like a dog. If there were still men in the Dir, you wouldn't dare raise your voice in front of white beards and in front of your father, you who have lived from plundering and who have brought dishonour on yourself forever. Still, times have changed and all that's left for your own people now is to make of you their war chief...

At this, 'Ali U Husa could not restrain himself and, with a swift gesture, he lifted the tail of his burnous and, with hands clutching his carbine, he resolutely moved towards the war amghar. But, at that very moment, the drone of a plane could be heard from the clear sky, spreading confusion among the audience.

Then, there was total panic, and a frantic rush started towards the neighbouring caves, the normal refuges against bombardments.

The shining plane, flying high, slowly drew a few circles above the houses, while hundreds of shots were fired at it from behind the rocks and fig trees. Then, it dropped a bag from which emerged hundreds of white sheets which were dispersed by the winds in all corners of the area. Eventually, it went into a dive towards the North, followed by the vain shooting, and then disappeared.

Then, having anxiously scanned the horizon, the crowd came out of the caves, pounced on the papers that had been dropped on the village and took them to a taleb.

The learned man took one, adjusted his glasses and read, first to himself following custom, and then to the impatient audience:

From Captain Alain, Commander of Ait Ishaq bled, to the Dir people:

Praise be to God.

As you realized yesterday, I am strong and able to respond with harm to those who try to inflict it on me—I could even punish you more harshly, for your fields are within easy reach for me—however, I would like to reiterate that, as far as I am concerned you are not real enemies, and I will attack you only if you stir up trouble again. I will not even hold against you the fact of receiving among you ‘Ali U Hussa, the traitor who thought that his rebellion would make me leave the country- I have a great number of horsemen and weapons, and he knows this better than any of you. Stop, then, believing in lies and accept to live in peace until God Almighty has us gathered in joy and prosperity.

As to your prisoners, don't worry about them. France is great and generous, and will not take revenge on unarmed men or on children. All it wants is to have enough power to punish agitators and those who follow them blindly. Tell the prisoners' families that they may come, without fear, to the post to see their children. I grant them the aman, day and night.

Greetings.

When the taleb finished his reading, he had to translate the text into Berber for, among the thousand people who were listening to him, only a few tradesmen could understand Arabic. Then, he was presented with other documents which he certified as being similar to the one he had just read.

Then comments went on nineteen to the dozen in each group, while the impressed but quietened Djema'a was progressively gathering on the slabs of the small square resuming discussion anew.

Now it was El Hadj ‘Ali, amghar of Ait Ishaq, who was about to speak. He was now resolute about going to see the victorious Captain Alain who was expecting him. And, delighted at the way things were going during the meeting, he decided to profit from the situation and create for himself yet other motives for consideration by the Frenchman, while at the same time passing off as arbiter in the eyes of the unsubdued tribes.

That, obviously, would not be an easy thing to achieve, because of the insistence on the part of the prisoners’ parents on freeing their children at any cost, with the help of the other tribes. However, Captain Alain’s razzia having brought the tribes back to their senses, the Ait Ya’qub U ‘Ayssa would be left on their own.

Besides, and thanks to the skill of the new friend of the French, the El Qebab alliance would be, in fact, denounced for good.

Eventually, the general discussion ceased and the atmosphere turned heavy, as words full of bitterness were still being exchanged among groups, each taking advantage of the situation to quench a grudge through hustling a rival’s self-esteem. Then, a few notables having suddenly found excuses for going home, the square was gradually deserted and the tribes went back to their encampments, making passionate comments about the day’s events. Meanwhile, an old man, a distant relative of ‘Ali U Husa, broken and riddled with age, walked toward the plain, with a sickle in his hand, and, under the pretext of going to get some grass, he moved towards the post where Captain Alain was waiting for him.

Chapter XIII : An Emissary from the other Side...

That evening, Captain Alain received three emissaries from the dissidence whose declarations were of the greatest interest to him.

The first to arrive was 'Ali U Husa's emissary. The second, a woman, had brought a letter from Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa, who were parents to the prisoners from the last battle. The third was the faithful Taybi who was overjoyed and very proud indeed. He was there to announce not only El Hadj 'Ali's visit, the man having now been conquered, but also that of another Ait Ishaq notable by the name of Hamu U Melluk. The latter had spontaneously manifested the wish to come and offer the French officer the submission of his fraction.

'Ali U Husa's emissary spoke thus:

Today's meeting at Tinteghallin has been most interesting. 'Ali U Husa almost managed to cause a real battle. Unfortunately, your plane and your letter stopped the imminent fight. Why on earth did you send them? Didn't you trust your good friend? You see, with the Berbers, you should never haste nor ask for too much at once. In anyway, your undertakings to the tribes did raise their suspicion, and the notable El Hadj 'Ali of Ait Ishaq did not fail to make use of such suspicion to impose calm at the very moment the first shots were to be fired. All in all, 'Ali U Husa would like you to know that the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa and the Ait Bu Haddu will remain at Tadjema't, where they have been settling since this morning. If no foolhardiness is committed from this side, the two tribes will come down to the plain within less than eight days, in conformity with your wish. Refrain from showing too much kindness to the prisoners, or to those who may come to see them. And, the most important is that you don't release the captives too soon, if you want their parents to come back to the post often enough. Besides, you can gain the Ait 'Ari's⁽¹⁾ friendship only by pretending that you don't really care about it and by showing how strong you are. On the other hand, if you happen to be told that 'Ali U Husa has betrayed you, don't you believe it. He will, somehow, be obliged to speak ill of you and even at times, join other young people in their expeditions against your post or your mokhaznis. This is for him the only way to avoid death and go on serving you. He will come back here when you order him to do so.

The second emissary was “Aysha Ahmed, a woman completely unknown at the post . She was wearing wretched clothes in fear of being robbed by the auxiliaries of the French. Already weighed down by the years, she shyly introduced herself to the mokhazni on guard and asked to see the prisoners and the man of the place (argaz u ansa ya). *It is important, she begged him that you tell the man that I am only a messenger of the prisoners’ parents and that I have nothing to do with the events of the last few days. I also have nothing to do with ‘Ali U Hussa who has just betrayed him after betraying his own brothers.*

She was immediately ushered into Captain Alain’s office. First, she was stunned at the sight before her very eyes. Not only had the rumi a human face, contrary to the legends that went around him all through the mountains, but the Amazigh he spoke was as pure as that spoken by all Imazighen⁽¹⁾. Moreover, as he was clad in a blue burnous similar to that of his mokhaznis, but made of finer cloth, and as he was surrounded by half a dozen quiet and deferential auxiliaries, he looked like a great Zayan chieftain presiding over a fine Djema’a. There was even a tea tray to complete the scene.

However, the old woman noticed that, contrary to mountain customs, the rumi had shaved his beard and kept a moustache, and that the walls and the ground were covered with very beautiful carpets.

Finally, she found it really incredible that, instead of making her squat among the shoes that cluttered up the entrance of the room as any Berber notable would have done, the officer had reserved a seat for her on the beautiful divans between two mokhaznis. He also ordered a big glass of hot tea and cakes for her.

Having been made fully at ease by all these signs of consideration, she started drinking her tea. However, as she dreaded pork fat and the potential hell, she concealed the cakes in a pleat of her dress.

And, while the officer was talking to his Shawush, she started pondering.

As an emissary sent by the Djema’a of her tribe to investigate what the rumi intended to do with the captives, she had received plenty of advice and had been told, in particular, to be *careful and not give the enemy the impression that we are afraid of him. As you are covered by the aman that he has granted*

(1) It is worth-noticing here that during the heated discussion that ensued, ‘Aysha Ahmed would often forget this specificity because of the uniform and intended and prolonged silence of the officer

in his letter to all those who could come to see him, you have nothing to fear. Tell him that we do consider ourselves as victors of Saturday, that we still have a lot of ammunition and that we have left the plain to go and prepare our corn crops in the mountain. If he asks about our wheat and barley crops, tell him that if they are burnt, we will not allow him a day's rest. Beware of Shawush Lahsen in particular. He is a 'shitan' (devil) who will want to intimidate you, but he cannot go against his master's will. If you decide to see Mustapha U Muhand and talk to him in private, tell him that we recommend our people to him and that, if he is willing to help us get their freedom, we would be most grateful. Besides, if he is still the man we have always known him to be, he will not deny help to his brothers and childhood companions. If the prisoners' redemption is mentioned, do say that we have been most generous with Raho the prisoner and that, if we have somewhat treated him roughly, it was only under the other tribes' pressure. Don't say that the El Qebab pact has been broken. On the contrary, proclaim loud and clear that we are still as united as ever, and that if the Christian ever thinks of coming to the mountain, the whole Dir would stand against him. Concerning 'Ali U Hussa, say that we have received him because we could not do otherwise, and that he most certainly will not stay with us for long.

When the mountain woman politely turned down the fourth glass of tea offered to her, indicating that negotiations could start, the conversation was initiated by a sally from the staff sergeant:

- So, dear mother, the tribes have no more men and are now using women as emissaries?

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

Why are you saying this Mustapha? You know that the Dir abounds with men. You saw them on Saturday at the Ben Khelil battle...

- Mustapha:

In that case, why are you here?

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

Well, because women have always done what I am here to do today with the rumi.

Mustapha:

- That is not true, for every time you wanted to negotiate with the Imahzan of Khenifra who are as 'rumi' as we are, you did send them men. The truth is

that, as far as you are concerned, the rumi does not deserve the same consideration. Still, you will have to change...

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

It is possible that what you are saying is true, but that is a matter of concern only to our Djema'a. I have been instructed to come and see you and all I have to do is obey. You shouldn't be asking such questions that may antagonise 'this man' against your brothers. In fact, we were hoping to rely on you to help us and use your influence. Doesn't our blood flow in your veins anymore?

- Mustapha:

No, I have nothing in common with you and I will not help you before you are here, beside me in the post. The blood that reminds me of you is not of the kind you believe, but the kind that flew in the veins of Raho U 'Ali under the blows of your bullies. As the ox in the legend said: my brother is the one who pulls the plough beside me...

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

You have changed a lot, for there was a time when you did not relinquish torturing the Christian captives. Remember one day at El Herri...

- Mustapha:

Then, I was blind, I did not know anything about the Christians who had just arrived to Khenifra. I, then, had no reason to deal with them with care. The great men of our tribes did depict them to us as enemies of Islam, as mean and cruel men. They used to tell us that the Christians were intent on taking our children from us and making of them soldiers or prostitutes. How, under these circumstances, could I refrain from harming them whenever I could? However, today I have come to realise exactly what the Christian really is and I cannot but laugh at the stupid things I was told about him. I now hold a tremendous grudge against even all the liars, particularly your harmful igurramen, who used to lead us in the evil way and who have caused so many unnecessary deaths amongst us.

Upon hearing these words, which mortified her as they had been *uttered by a man from the Dir*, the old 'Aysha could no more stand still and she was lost for words. What's more, she did not know how to express all her contempt for *the enemy of Islam* and his auxiliaries, between those four walls. She would most certainly run the risk of being beaten up by the terrible Shawush who had not yet said anything. She would perhaps even be imprisoned. Why wasn't

she in her own duwar? She would have already drawn the whole of her tribe, and Mustapha the felon, would have been torn to pieces for daring to insult the igurramen, the best of God's creation.

However, she gradually regained her self-confidence because of the silence of the officer who was now leaning forward and scrutinising some documents. Besides, she had to bear in mind that because of the mission she had been assigned, she could not keep quiet nor show any sign of fear. Quite the contrary, she had to show off for the sake of her own people and, if she went beyond the limits, she knew, just as all people in the mountain knew, that it would be the French chief himself who would forbid his Berber auxiliaries from treating her harshly.

Therefore, she straightforwardly and unceremoniously answered Mustapha:

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

Mustapha, I do think that 'your stomach rules your heart'⁽¹⁾ and I feel ashamed for you. Not only have you deserted the ranks of your brothers when our mountains most needed all their men, but you have stuffed yourself with "kumir" (pejorative for bread baked the European way). You go even further in your treason and dare insult the illustrious marabouts whose baraka guards our tribes. How could you have changed so quickly, when only a few months ago, you fought so courageously for our faith and independence? How could you have sided so eagerly and genuinely with those for whom bread goes before prayer? I am sure the rumi himself must despise you. As to me, I do curse the breath of life that's still in me and that exposes me to the sad sight that you offer.

In his turn, Mustapha who was deeply hurt, was sorry that the crazy woman did not give her harangue outside the presence of the officer. He would have taken pleasure in strangling her.

The fact was that, having submitted to the French only recently, he was not yet used to his new situation and to the humiliations that such situation often implied. Of course he was devoted to the Christian and he had amply demonstrated it under many circumstances. How could the situation be otherwise with this man who, from morning to evening, spent all his time thinking about what he could do for the Imazighen. But, Mustapha's relatives were not all with him yet. His father had remained in the mountain in spite of

(1) You will do anything to satisfy your stomach (greed)

all his begging...And so had his best friends...Therefore, his heart was still on the other side, and it was with great sorrow that he had heard the old 'Aysha remind him of this. Moreover, he knew very well that the woman was only expressing what everybody thought of him at Buyghssayen. Thus, he felt pain because he had brought dishonour on himself, and he held a grudge against his chief for not sparing him such a scene.

However, he felt that he had to respond, not to let 'Aysha Ahmed have the last word. Otherwise, the witch (*the kahena*)⁽¹⁾ will the next day spread the news that she had *shut him up*. It was also important for him to show how sincere his loyalty to the officer was. Then, as he was unable to defeat the mountain woman who was protected by the Captain's aman, he decided to lash out a few well chosen insults that she would take back and repeat to her own Djema'a and which would reassure the chief of the post. But Shawush Lahsen, feeling that Mustapha was at a loss, and that he was about to lose his temper in a clumsy way, did not allow for this to happen. The Shawush was more familiar than Mustapha with the puerile arrogance of the visiting unsubdued. He knew, in any way, that his chief would always draw useful conclusions about a more lasting loyalty, more convinced and more solid than that of Mustapha. He decided that it was up to him to plead the cause of his friend, his own cause and that of all the mokhaznis and imsubren (the subdued). As a matter of fact, he was going to do it his way, using a mocking tone, sometimes with calculated brutality, but not without pity because, after all, he sincerely felt sorry for the unsubdued who sulked the rumi and his kind deeds.

- Shawush Lahsen:

You old fool, I thought that your brothers had sent us a woman, but I was wrong. What we have here is an adder of some species. We will, then, deal with you accordingly. Get closer to me, still closer. Where did you learn to speak with so much audacity before men? Without a doubt, it was among the oleanders and gullies, when you were young, a long time ago.

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

You are insulting me, oh Lahsen my son. And you have no right to.

- Shawush Lahsen:

You started it, and I am not your son. My mother is a decent woman, a

(1) Kahena is the name of the queen of Aures who achieved a union of the Berbers during the VIIIth Century. Has always been a synonym of 'witch'

quality which you seem to lack completely. Well, then, answer my questions: How dare you talk about religion when you have never approached water nor learnt how to make ablutions?

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

....

- Shawush Lahsen:

What do you know about Muhamed and Allah? You can't even say whether they are men or animals! Do you know what they look like? Tell me.

- 'Aysha Ahmed (scared) :

I don't know, but all the same, I am a Muslim.

- Shawush Lahsen:

Can you say the shahada?⁽¹⁾

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

Yes, of course: La Illah la Illah Mahamed Rasoul Allah

- Shawush Lahsen:

And, you think this is the right way of saying it? Surely, you deserve to be slashed. La...la...la...It sounds like the singing of a jolly fellow from the post. What's more is that you utterly destroy your prophet's name.

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

How should I pronounce then?

- Shawush Lahsen:

Muhamed, you old infidel woman...Mo...Mo..., not Ma...To think that I, an 'amsuber' (subdued) have to teach you how to pronounce it while, since the rumi's arrival in this country, the last among your beggars claims to be a chief...

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

We were Muslims long before the Christian's arrival here.

1. A Muslim's pledge to the unity of God (See Lexicon)

- Shawush Lahsen:

That's what you think, you idiots...in fact, you don't know anything about religion for, your voluntary submission to its precepts which are neither binding nor costly does not prevent you from totally ignoring the others. You say the shahada, rather badly as I have just pointed out, merely because uttering the words does not cost you much and because you are scared of the hereafter. You do bury your dead following Islamic law, but only because you could not think of a simpler ritual. How can you be so ignorant as to resort to an Arab learned man to read a verse of the Quran every time you have a death? You keep calling for meetings of Muslims, but your resolutions never last longer than the sound of your own words. You don't really bother yourselves with the requirements of Islam. Prayer does require that you wake up during the night and that you take the trouble to perform it many times a day. But you find that it takes too long and you just forget about it. You consider that Ramadan⁽¹⁾ is an institution for the rich and you exempt yourselves from it under the most futile of pretexts and even without excuse.

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

But, we do all of us fast.

- Shawush Lahsen:

Let's talk about your mosques. They are no more than squalid tents that you carry with you everywhere and that can serve any purpose but that for which they are meant...

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

We have real mosques in Khenifra, El Qebab and here at the Zawiya...

- Shawush Lahsen:

Oh, yes. I did forget those, but perhaps we'd better not talk about them...

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

Why shouldn't we?

- Shawush Lahsen:

Because those mosques are more a witness to your impiety than to your love of Islam. Take the mosque of Khenifra, it was in fact built by the old tyrant

(1) Annual fasting that lasts one month during which Muslims are allowed to eat, drink and smoke only after sunset. The same applies to sexual relationships.

MuhaU Hamu only to keep, in the village that he had taken from Ait Bu Haddu, the Arabs who sold cotton cloth and sugar. And, although it has been set up at the expense of the tribes and with money donated by the prostitutes, no Amazigh used it to pray because the warriors, just like their master, considered prayer a luxury and preferred to fight...

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

My son, you are rather exaggerating...

- Shawush Lahsen:

The El Qebab mosque, by all means, is a nice building, with beautiful colonnades. But it was built by the Sahara Arabs and the Mouloudi⁽¹⁾ who came from all over the country and whom the Ishqern allowed to indulge in their enterprise, hoping that they would benefit from it in some way. And, just as was the fate of the Khenifra mosque, it has always been and still is deserted because only people who are clean in body and clothes are allowed in. I am certain that when the French arrive in El Qebab, the first thing that the Ishqern will do is sell to them so that they can turn it into an office or a school...

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

Never!

- Shawush Lahsen:

Do not interrupt me, old woman. That will prevent you from uttering even more nonsense. Now, let us say something about the Zawiya. It surely has been a house of God where people have been most at ease to pray. But, do you know, you stupid woman, that it was built by an Arab Sultan with the obvious purpose of consolidating, fool that he was, the conversion of the old Ait Ishaq who had just relinquished the Jewish religion...Do you know that the Zawiya lasted no more than twenty years because the good Muslims, of whom you are descendants, found no better than steal its mosaics and engraved woodwork, and even its bricks which were no use to them...Finally, do you know that the old walls are still standing, as a matter of fact as a God sent refuge for snakes and rats, only thanks to the French General who has prohibited that anybody should harm them and ordered that they be defended against your prowlers? You see then, that your Islam is a joke, and that there is nothing more ridiculous than hearing you reproach Mustapha and all of us with forgetting religion.

(1) Name of an Arab trader

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

No, son, whatever you may say, we are very good Muslims and if you were really fair, you would easily recognise the fact. We were Sidi Bubeker's favourites...

- Shawush Lahsen:

The favourites of a sorcerer who lived on lies and abused your gullibility.

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

We have always regularly given alms during the religious festivals.

- Shawush Lahsen:

You have indeed, always proclaiming it aloud and making sure that everybody knew about it. And, always doing things in such a way that those who benefited from your good deeds were among your own relatives...

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

Each of our tent-mosques gets wealthier every year thanks to important donations.

- Shawush Lahsen:

...with the product of such donations serving to supply yourselves with weapons to be used against your own brothers.

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

It has to be so since God created us to be enemies to each other. Today, we are getting armed in order to fight the Christian and Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi⁽¹⁾ himself...

- Shawush Lahsen:

No, no! Don't talk to me about that 'goat skin'. He is your worst enemy

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

He is our protector...

- Shawush Lahsen:

He is your enemy, I am telling you! And, you know this as well as I do. Isn't he the one who is always urging you to get killed when he goes into hiding in his hole of Tihuna at the first shot?

(1) Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi was said to have a very dark skin

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

He does protect us with his baraka

- Shawush Lahsen:

Has the baraka you're talking about been any good against the rumi's progressive advance? Has it prevented the Captain from being here, sitting in front of you and looking at you from his position as a master?

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

Of course, no. but how do we know? Perhaps our misfortunes would have been worse if it hadn't been for his baraka.

- Shawush Lahsen.:

If that is so, why is it that you rise up against the power that God has given to the rumi? Are you better Muslims than all the urbanites who live in the big cities and who have never raised their arms against the Christians? Are you better believers than all the Gharb Arabs who fought for one or two days and then surrendered? Finally, do you claim to be in a position to teach Islam to the Sultan himself, the most faithful guardian of Islam and the best of all igurramen? He, who welcomed the rumi with open arms?

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

But, son, you are telling me about people we've never seen, and, there is no way I can answer you. What is certain is that 'each buries his father as he sees fit'⁽¹⁾

- Shawush Lahsen.:

It seems that this is not the case. You consider us as renegades and traitors. Weren't you just a moment ago reproaching Mustapha with listening to his stomach more than to his heart?

- 'Aysha Ahmed.:

He fights against his brothers...

- Shawush Lahsen.:

There you are! Has it ever occurred to you that he is neither the first nor the last in behaving so? Don't you know that there isn't one tribe in the whole

(1) Local proverb meaning 'each is master of his own acts'

Gharb that has not contributed on a voluntary basis and with utter delight, after it had surrendered, to the pacification of the next tribe?

- 'Aysha Ahmed (resolute):

That's no reason or excuse. It's not because the Arabs of Buja'd have brought the rumi to you that you should help him defeat us. You are Berbers, and your duty is to liberate your country and help us preserve ours. Instead of this, you populate the Christians' posts and, all thanks to your obedience, one rumi is enough to raise huge harkas of Muslims and turn everything upside down. You have been bewitched and there is nothing in it for you, for the rumi whom you insist on serving is only passing here and, just like the wind, he will go away one day.

That was more than Lahsen could take. He despaired about convincing the old mountain woman. He had learnt his lesson and he was now sure that no argument could make her budge. Her steadiness grew every moment at the intended indifference of the officer who, without doubt, considered that it was not yet time for him to intervene. Could this mean that 'Aysha Ahmed had not been impressed by what she had heard? This, obviously, was not the case. For, just like Shawush Lahsen and Mustapha, she knew very well that it was without conviction that her brothers made reference to the dangers against Islam, in order to justify their hostility towards the Christians. The example of Ait M'Guild of Azru, the Zayan of Khenifra, and of all the seaside Arabs and Arabs elsewhere, was evidence that it is possible to live with the French without losing any of your religion. She was also aware of the fact that, what most worried the people of the Djebel, was the possibility of living under the domination of a foreigner whose reputation was duly harmed by the igurramen. She was also sure that, despite all, nothing could prevent the rumi from occupying the mountain whenever he wanted.

However, she could not forget that she had come with instructions which she had to abide by. Besides, she had been told that the hakem of the post was a man who was not against discussion, and that he always demonstrated more generosity toward those among his visitors who proved most straightforward and most steady. So, she realized that it was in her interest to speak loud, first, to make sure to obtain, later, a favourable answer concerning the prisoners, and then to get the rumi to grant her a substantial bonus about which she will keep quiet and which will allow her to take something back to her tent.

Under those circumstances, the Shawush who saw right through the game of the emissary considered that insisting any further was useless, and he

contemplated putting an end to the discussion. However, his own self-respect dictated that he would not be reduced to silence by the lousy old woman (mthishine a). Besides, he not only had to convince the enemy's messenger, but he also had to restore the wavering confidence that his friend Mustapha had in him and preserve his prestige as a speaker. Thus, while Captain Alain went on abstractedly fumbling through his book, Lahsen firmly resumed his attack on the old woman:

- Shawush Lahsen:

Did you say bewitched? May be so, my poor 'Aysha, but not as you may believe, in the Berber way. We have not been made to swallow henna pulp mixed with some marabout spit⁽¹⁾, we have not been covered with amulets full of lies... our friendship and our loyalty have been won, through words and deeds to which the prophet himself, had he been here, would not be insensitive. Go and look at our herds, and those of the subdued in Khenifra: they are the most beautiful and the most prosperous. Look at our families: none can match them in unity and happiness. Go and ask about our mosques, and our sanctuaries, you will understand that no Christian has ever approached them, and that they show concern in them only through ordering that they be maintained adequately. You think we are prohibited from practicing our religion? Go and ask the people of your tribe who serve here, you will realize that when it is prayer time, the French chief is first to think about suspending our duties. How can you be so foolish not to notice that Lahsen himself, who feared neither God nor devil, is now wearing a rosary?

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

Oh! Yes Lahsen. I did not fail to notice this when I entered this room and I meant to report it to people at home. However, this is so incredible that I am still wondering whether you haven't hung those 'grains' around your neck only this evening.

- Shawush Lahsen:

Do you mean just to receive a crazy old woman like you? No, don't you believe that, as a matter of fact, I am not the only one who has changed for the best. Hassan and Amahruq themselves, the terrible Amahruq, do you hear me, you brainless woman? They both have nothing on their minds but to do

(1) Allusion to the way some Berbers in the area try to cure a stomach disease called 'melhenni' or the 'henna disease'

well and pray. You well know that from father to son in their family, there has never been concern for anything but war mongering. That shows that, far from turning us into heathens, contact with the rumi has brought us closer to God.

- 'Aysha Ahmed:

But, why is it that you insult our shorfas and give up our country to the Christian?

- Shawush Lahsen:

We don't insult real shorfas who have understood that above their interests are those of the tribes. As you may notice, we honor them more than in the past and very often, not to say always, the French man himself urges us to do so because he knows that their genuine knowledge can only make of them friends of his. However, we are against the impostors who have appeared from all corners of the Sahara or simply even from the ravines of Ait Ihand. Those very people who dispatch you against the rumis' guns, just as they used to send us ourselves, not long ago, with the only aim of living longer over your bodies. As to giving up our country to the Christian, you know very well, you filthy old bag, that we have not yielded without resistance. Go and see our cemeteries and those of the Christian in Zayan country, you will realize that no tribe has defended itself with more determination than we have. Walk along our tracks and you will, at every step, trip over the stones of our graves. Still, no one should be required to achieve what is impossible, and when God had mercy and opened our eyes, we submitted to his will, and this for our own utmost benefit. Now, what have we gained from this? We now live in discipline, in peace and in affluence We are reassured about our future and we work only for ourselves. We now are aware of the prophet's real commandments, that is love for our fellowmen, tolerance, respect of others, charity...Do you know that the rumi provides protection even for our animals and that Qaid Ba'adi, the very brother of the man who used to bury his servants alive, has imprisoned for two days a Zayan who was guilty of ill treating his donkey? But, you are too stupid to understand what I am talking about, my poor 'Aysha, and I do feel that, I am only wasting my time trying to convince you. So, do as you wish, but in the prophet's name, stop barking from afar and do dare attack us once and for all. And if you are defeated, submit and let us live our life in peace and, then, take your turn to convince Ait 'Abdi who are awaiting you...Now, do tell us about the purpose of your visit, for I guess you are not here only to teach us lessons.

Teaching lessons was the last thing on 'Aysha Ahmed's mind, particularly in the presence of the infuriated Shawush. As a matter of fact, and seeing that

the mokhazni's harangue had produced the desired effect, the Captain slowly sat back on his divan and, with a composed voice, he reassured the visitor.

Then, upon 'Aysha's request to bring the prisoners, he advised her to go and fetch the notables of the tribe in order for the issue to be debated among men.

Thereupon, the unsubdued woman was rewarded with a few silver coins, which outraged the Shawush and his comrade Taybi who was getting impatient before he was ushered to see Captain Alain. But, the brave informer did not stay long with the officer. For as soon as he had informed him about the fact that both El Hadj 'Ali and Hamu U Melluk had agreed to come and see him the following day at the bureau, he requested permission to go back.

I will bring you my two 'lions' tomorrow, about midnight. I have arranged to meet El Hadj at Tibhirin and we shall start with him. Then, I will go and get Hamu whom I will be meeting at Buhara. Do beware of both of them, they are treacherous and canny. They, obviously, can serve you, but make sure that they understand that you won't be taken by fine words nor promises. El Hadj has authority over his tribe, but the tribe will not follow him if he requires that they submit at the same time as he does. Hamu enjoys prestige only among his own close relatives, about thirty tents, but if you know how to convince him, you will have his group beside you in no time. Of course, both of them are candidates for the position of Qaid and you will have to make promises in this respect. Do not hesitate and leave it to God to get it out of the predicament.

Chapter XIV : El Hadj ‘Ali and Hamu U Melluk

In the unsubdued Berber areas, the management of public affairs is the responsibility of the Djema’a in each group, that is, it is restricted to notables chosen by their brothers or simply nominated by the public in order to attend to the moral and material interests of the collectivity.

As already mentioned in the *Montagne Berbère*, the Djema’a concurrently holds all the administrative, judicial, political and military attributions. In time of war, in particular, it is the Djema’a’s task to organize resistance, order assaults, conclude alliances and negotiate peace. We can then say that it really holds public power and that it rules over the destiny of the group.

However, such sovereignty is not really absolute, for it is submitted to permanent and rigorous control by the people. The people agree to delegate power to the citizens who can afford the leisure and means which allow them to indulge in politics, but in fact, they do as they wish. And, when a decision taken by their leaders does not meet their aspirations and expectations, they, without hesitation, *take to the street*, that is the village square or the duwar square. The square in fact constitutes the sacred concourse where passionate discussions take place and where sometimes, when they judge it necessary, they stage real coups d’état, thus granting their government to men whom they think are more entitled to it than those who have brought upon themselves the people’s disapproval. In case of a compromising involvement with the enemy, the people will go as far as setting themselves up as a court and carrying out, sometimes without proceedings, the most merciless of sentences.

That is how we can understand that the unsubdued Djema’as should exercise so much care in all circumstances, and more particularly in their dealings with us.

The fact is that it is not only a matter of honor for members of the Djema’a, but it also concerns their wealth and even their life. Moreover, the Djema’as are made up of the most righteous, the wisest, the most courageous and the richest men, but who are also envious of each other and who relentlessly and ferociously keep an eye on each other. Thus, it is almost impossible for the most clever among our officers at the front to enter in contact with the Djema’as before *the day indicated by God*, that is before a real and final defeat of the tribe.

However, if the Djema'as as assemblies are resistant to any kind of premature reconciliation with the enemies they see in us, either because they feel it is their duty or out of self-interest, this is not always the case with their members when they are approached individually, through the mediation of men they trust. In this case, the real Berber character wins over, spurred by a kept secret and greed and ambition which, to a large extent, serve to facilitate the French officer's task of establishing friendships. This could be the case of a notable crippled with debt wishing to hire his services to the rumi in order to get rid of his creditors or, to release a mortgaged patch of land...It could also simply be the case of someone who is intent on swelling his wealth and benefiting from being close to a rich and generous Christian. Others, still, which is the case of a majority, give in advance to the inevitable fate and are worried about the future. They aspire at creating for themselves rights to the Christian sinecure through making the first move in the direction of the powerful invaders.

It all then becomes a matter of skill, well measured generosity and persistence on the part of the alluring French. Most of all, it is also a matter of organization and procedures of management of intelligence services. For, it is here that the mighty role of the informer-intermediary is most obvious.⁽¹⁾ He is the one who urges for perseverance or discourages by the very way he reports verbal messages that he is instructed to transmit. And, obviously, his conduct is dictated in all circumstances by his own self interest, his friendships and his enmities.

If he happens to develop personal consideration for an unsubdued notable whose good fortune is looming, he will be full of the best advice for him and will suggest that he adopt the most appropriate attitudes, likely to win him the rumi's favors. He will go even as far as dictating letters which will put him in good stand vis-à-vis the Christian whose ideas and wishes he is well aware of. When, on the other hand, he feels reluctant to help towards the success of a man he hates, he always makes sure that the man is made to remain in obscurity. He will, if necessary, lie and distort the true feelings of those he is supposed to get together, in order to help them achieve success more effectively when he wishes to, or, quickly widen the gap which will separate them forever.

However, whatever tendency the Berber notables may have towards letting themselves be corrupted and, however obliging their reception of the informer-

(1) See La Montagne Berbère (The informer, L'informateur)

intermediary's overtures may be, nothing is more difficult than convincing them into making the decisive step which consists in meeting their French counterpart. They will often consent to sending and receiving messages and, they are willing to provide assurances of friendship and loyalty from afar. They are even ready to show good will to the extent of providing tangible evidence of the sincerity of their feelings through carrying out, within their tribe, a number of non-committing actions which have been suggested to them and for which they have received compensation. But, they will resign themselves to actually following our emissaries to the posts only when they are driven to extremes.

The fact is that, if they accept offers made by our emissaries, therefore getting involved in compromising deals at a distance, they always nourish an ulterior motive of deceiving and betraying us, should their self-interest dictate such behavior one day. A promise that is made from a distance, through an intermediary, is easy to withdraw, whereas a formal commitment, made man-to-man and face-to-face, can be broken only at the cost of dishonor. Therefore, our partners are well advised to defer, as long as possible, the moment when they have to sign their friendship agreement with the enemy of the tribe.

Besides, our contact with the unsubdued who have never seen us inspires real fear to them: *You see, an Ait Shart notable who had come to negotiate for the first time told us, we in the mountain have always believed that you were made differently from us. When I came to you, I expected to meet an extraordinary being, half man and half animal, foul-smelling and repulsive. I even had to promise my people that I would make sure to come back clean by not getting too close to you. I promised not to even taste the food that you may offer me. And, when I entered this room sooner, I cursed the devil, as though to ward off a misfortune. Now I am glad to see that none of the horror stories we have been told about you is true and that I have to deal with a man just like me. However, I must confess that your dress is somewhat strange and shocking to the eye. One must certainly get used to it since the Muslims have already adopted it, but when you receive our ignorant people from the Djebel, you'd better wear a burnous. And, remember to speak Berber to them...*

It becomes easy, then, to understand why in these circumstances, not only how much Taybi had to exert himself in order to convince El Hadj 'Ali to follow him, but also how much impact the Ben Khelil victory, which had urged Hamu U Melluk to come to Turgilal, had on the course of events in the mountain. In any way, the day before the notables' visit proved as long for the Captain as it had proved for the two unsubdued men. The French officer, who

had for long years, been used to the excessive and interested optimism of informers, had done well not to announce the expected event to his chiefs: *It will never be too late, he thought, to telegraph or telephone when the event actually materializes. For, it is better to have to apologize for a delay in sending good news than announce a set back. After all, I do not know anything for certain; all I have is assurances from Taybi. The brave man so often takes his wishes for a reality, as attested in the many visits that he announced but which never materialized, that he may be wrong once again. Besides, if I make too much noise in advance about the matter at hand, I run the risk of being the laughing stock of the near front in case of failure, and thus being considered a joke. As to my visitors, they are going to put me in a really embarrassing situation, if they do come to the meeting. El Hadj is amghar of the tribe, but being amghar does not mean that he is the real chief. And, even if he were, any concession that he makes in public in my favor, without the consent of his brothers who are still hostile towards me, would lead to his immediate destitution, or even something worse. The same goes for Hamu U Melluk, who holds the same position in his sub-fraction. I, therefore, am not in a position at the moment to require that they adopt a friendly personal attitude and that they provide me with accurate information about what is going on in their tribe. Perhaps they could also centralize their own groups in case hostilities start, but I know only too well the warring dispositions of the Berbers to dare hope that the Ait Ishaq will once again remain in their own area should shots be heard anew in their neighbourhood. On Saturday, and whatever Taybi may think of it, they abstained from getting involved only to punish the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa for their indecent behavior at Tighessalin and also because the fact that their own suq is too far did not allow them to join their neighbors on time. As to the promises I may have to make, I have no choice and I know I am going to have two candidates for the position of Qaid on my hands about whom I, in fact, know nothing except that they are the first to have accepted to negotiate. Still, as Taybi said, things will be easily sorted out when I see my two men at work. In the meantime, I need to have two sheep slaughtered and two full meals prepared so that my visitors both receive the consideration they deserve...*

For their part, El Hadj 'Ali and Hamu U Melluk were at least as concerned as the Captain, and although they were thirty kilometers away from each other, they entertained the same thoughts.

Here I am, thrust into adventure and dishonor. Had anyone told me this a few days ago, he would have risked immediate death. Honored with my

people's trust, respected by all here, am I now condemned to lie all the time, in order to avoid being suspected and killed. If at least I was betraying my brothers for the Muslims...This is not the case, I am now going to commit myself to serving the 'war eddin'⁽¹⁾, these black men who look like crows⁽²⁾, whose names nobody here can utter without cursing the devil. I doubt if I will even be able to appear before the Djema'a without shame. I don't think a crime as vile as this can be concealed. However, if I don't make the first move, I will most certainly be forestalled by others. Taybi did tell me indeed that there isn't one notable in the Dir who has not paid a visit to the rumi and who has not received the promise of a commanding position. In fact, whatever we do, the Christian is more powerful than we are, he will rule these mountains and will reach even Ait Sukhman. I do not, in any way, wish to submit to the authority of a rival nor contribute to the fattening up of an enemy. Besides, I consider that I have done enough harm to the rumi. Didn't I kill two of his men at El Herri? Don't I still have two of his guns? And, isn't access to the Buhara plain prohibited to him thanks to my own doing?. I believe I have carried out my duty towards Islam in the most appropriate way and have the right, now, that God has granted victory to the enemy, to do as so many are doing, not forgetting to take precautions. What is more, my move will not prevent me from taking part in the baruds beside my brothers if they decide to go on fighting and, on the day of deliverance (la'fu), I will kill with my own hands anybody responsible for this day of shame. The most important is that I am not asked for something impossible this evening.

Now, the moon has risen and its worn light covered the Ait Ishaq bled and the Iguezdu⁽³⁾ of the tribe.

As usual, the dogs continued barking around each duwar, in order to dissuade potential criminals while hyenas, jackals, foxes, hares and rabbits felt safe swarming about the Sidi Sa'id and Bugrir bush, their favorite area. Their eyes sparkled in the bushes, like twin flickering nightlights flashing from one shrub to another.

From time to time, a sinister howl or a yelp would rent the air, scaring the numbed birds in the trees and, interrupting for a few seconds the song of the little girl or the grandmother who turned the hand mill in a tent of the duwar

(1) 'without religion'

(2) Reference to the black uniforms worn by our soldiers.

(3) Camp made up of a number of duwars

nearby. On the tracks, everything was quiet and there was no sign of life. The animals had left them for the humans and the latter, fearing the danger of death there had deserted them since sunset. All this because night life is ruled by the prowler who spreads terror in the country, and, woe to the traveler who is absent-minded or who tries to spare his energy by taking easy ways. A gun shot from a clump of mastic tree or from a tree trunk, or a stab all of a sudden dealt from an innocent looking ditch, await the traveler and punish him for his carelessness and his fatal laziness.

The countryside, on the other hand, is full of animation at this time. There are youth who, armed to the teeth, roam the area, and lovers who cautiously go to meet their beloved. The corn fields, whose turn it is to be irrigated at night, keep out of their tents a great number of irebba'n⁽¹⁾ and their indispensable companions, responsible for protecting their lives, arms in hands.

And while the precious liquid flowed in tiny cascades among the stones that had hardly been moved, two groups of horsemen, the first of which had departed from Butasefsaft and the other from Kheddi, slowly proceeded towards the Marabout of Sidi Sa'id.

Among the first group was El Hadj, canny, courageous and verging on foolhardiness. Erect on his horse, he spoke in fine words to his companions, more particularly to those among the audience he could come close to without revealing the purpose of his escapade: *I saw, this afternoon, a number of Christians wandering towards Tibhirin. What were they up to? I don't know but I am of the opinion that this is an opportunity we can't afford to waste. God willing, we will make a few spoils...* His companions, all purposefully selected and fully informed, shouted their approval and went one better for the invisible audience.

The second group, on the contrary, observed a dead silence. Hamu U Melluk, who was older and wiser, had opted for a complicated itinerary which had never tempted anyone before. He even went further in his precautions and imposed on his companions, a brother and a cousin, gray horses and bright white clothes which would guarantee more safety under the inopportune moon.

They, thus, moved for three hours among the trees and rocks, reluctantly overlooking the tempting game, but rather being more careful not to make any noise, except that which was meant to hoodwink ill meaning projects.

(1) Farmers receiving one fourth of the crop (corn and garden produce)

Finally, they reached the marabout that marked the limit beyond which nobody could venture, unless he was known to harbor a certain hostility towards the Christian, and without being suspected of trying to collude with him.

With extreme precaution, and as though feeling their way along, the two groups who were well aware of the dangers of the area but could avoid it only at the price of a long and risky roundabout way, advanced one towards the other, with rifles in hands and ready for the assault and for the action that would insure safety should the situation warrant it. They walked up to each other and were now face to face at the turn of a pathway whose ground had deafened the steps of the horses... Then, the dead and tragic silence and the poignant anguish were suddenly broken by a raucous shout, accompanied by the noise of six breeches that had just been unlatched:

- *Man digsen a yen? (Who goes there?)*

All at once, two, three, four, shots resounded, disturbing the serenity of the night, alerting the dogs of the neighborhood and sounding the alarm as far as the sentries at the post which spread its whitish mass in the fearsome plain. Then, it all stopped.

As though ashamed of their unwarranted nervousness, the horsemen instantly ceased the fusillade. They did not utter a sound, and no call came out of their mouths: the worst act of carelessness in such circumstances was to call a name. Besides, they had expected something happening by surprise and each group had, in advance, decided on a rallying point. Therefore, the most important now was to flee, without worrying about the other group, who in turn had turned tail with the aim of drawing back.

Then, all of a sudden, everything around the holy place and its tombs became deserted, while the horsemen disappeared in the thicket and ravines, cursing the Christian and his friend Taybi. No warrior had moved in the Ait Sma'il encampment.

At midnight, in the sleeping post, only Captain Alain, his Shawush and Mustapha the sergeant had stayed up and waited, having each prepared a meal for the djebel *salopards* (*bastards*)

In order to avoid any kind of indiscreetness, they had moved away from the building and for a few hours, all the mokhaznis from the Dir and all the sentries from the so-called informers' gate. Then, with the aim of averting any risk of error, they had ordered the men on duty not to fire first, whatever the circumstances.

They did hear the shots in the faraway countryside, but as none of their men were out and having been used for a long time to such gunfire, between prowlers, they were not worried in the least.

The hours elapsed so slowly that they climbed to the turret dominating the plain towards Sidi Sa'id and scanned the bled, trying to unravel its secret: mystery. However, nothing seemed to move and the only thing that attracted the eye was the small pile of white stones set at 500 meters from the post wall to signal to Taybi that the entry way for that night was free.

Then, Shawush Lahsen, who was being overcome by sleep went to lean over the parapet beside his chief and, delighted at the opportunity to loosen his tongue, he made his last recommendations in a low voice, saying:

- You will see that El Hadj is a most extraordinary man. He is so young that you will find it difficult to believe that he has been selected as amghar. However, when you have talked to him and realized how able he is, you will understand why he has been preferred to the other two old mummies Muha U 'Ali U Hjayn and Rahu U Menshish. He is a man of war, a braggart who lies shamelessly and who would kill his own father out of self interest. He is the one who said that, in the mountain, a man who entertains at his own expense and who does not know how to live off his brothers is a cretin. However, as he always shouts loud during meetings, as he knows how to get the rights of his tribe respected in all occasions, he is showered with admiration from his own people. As to Hamu U Melluk, your other guest for tonight, he is a completely different fellow, an 'amdhush' (cowardly) who does 'eat', as it's in their blood, but he does this in such a petty and shy way that he has no authority. When he is offered a loaf of sugar, he receives it as one would receive alms. He lacks style. So, if you are looking for a real chief...

- Your candidate, obviously, is the unscrupulous El Hadj. In this way, the tribe is sure to meet its fate: having been plundered by us during the time of dissidence, it will be handed over to someone who will shear it with style. My poor Lahsen, your long nights do not seem to have done you any good and your political ideas are affected accordingly. You're getting off the rails!

- Oh, no! Don't you believe that. What I am saying is right and obviously in the interest of all concerned.

- What then, do you make of our promises to protect the weak and make justice prevail?

- I say that these promises are fine, even splendid, and if I happen to die at the same time as you, I will not fail to recommend you to the masters of Paradise, however Christian you may be.

- You'd have to insure admission to Paradise for yourself first, and, considering what your record is like, that's not guaranteed. All your victims must be awaiting you up there, and your company will be incriminating, to say the least.

- No, I make no claim to straight access to Paradise, for I must certainly have scores to settle with God. The village Taleb, to whom I, one day, was foolish enough to relate my stories, has removed any illusion in this respect. But, people like me always manage and, as Sidna 'Azrayn⁽¹⁾ is, so they say, as cruel as I am, I will easily win him over to my side. When he asks me his first question 'Who is your God?' my answer will be 'my rifle and my cudgel'. He will, then, be so delighted to meet a colleague that he will not be able to do otherwise than offer me a little job between Hell and Paradise, just as you did place me between destitution and fortune. I will be a Shawush up there, just like here!

- You must be kidding!

- No, what I am saying is not crazy in any way, and, what is more, Sidna 'Azrayn is a Berber and just for this...

- How so?

- Didn't you know? It seems that in the other world, just as in this world, there are Arabs and Berbers. As normal, the Arabs who know how to write have benefited from this and reserved to themselves the position of the prophet, leaving to the Berbers that of 'Azrayn, his khalifa⁽²⁾, or, if you wish, that of executioner. Besides, if the Berbers are constantly waging fights against each other, in their own country, they become brothers as soon as they have no fields or women to fight over. I, therefore, am certain to find a powerful ally, and, as you are my friend, I will recommend you to him.

- Well, then, if that's all you have to reassure and protect me, we can both expect to roast without pity in Hell. You'd better tell me more about El Hadj now.

(1) Assistant (to the prophet)

(2) The death angel who receives souls and asks them to account for their deeds (Islamic religion)

- Yes, of course, for in my turn, I find you most hopeless. You seem to think that, just because once I lived among the neighbors, I am only fit for the dustbin now

- No, you're fit for the fire of Hell!

- Now then, please, let's say no more about that. I could become an honest man and you would be the first to complain about it.

- Why should I?

- Because in your situation, you don't need honest men but fellows like me who are ready to kill without turning a hair.

- We are not concerned here with your war deeds but with your petty theft.

- As far as I am concerned, it's all the same, for to take away a goat or sheep from the enemy is the same as making war against him. If it were otherwise, what would the purpose of your own razzias be? They are no more than petty theft on a large scale, useful to your politics and your mokhaznis. But, it seems that this kind of discussion is likely to take us too far, so let's get back to El Hadj. I would then, say that this man is a rogue, but a rogue who is able to do you great services if you don't insist on instantly making of him a perfect man, under the pretext that you want justice. Moreover, his brothers whom you intend to protect even before you have them beside you, are not the kind of men you French people imagine. As they have been, since an early age, used to belong to a clan and to fight, they are not really after true justice by submitting to you, and by losing their freedom. What they are after is an alliance against their enemies from the other tribes; that is a means of achieving victory in a fratricidal fight to which their submission is not conceived of as an end. Therefore, what you need to promise them is not Paradise on earth, which is impossible and about which they have no idea, but good rifles and plenty of cartridges which will allow them to 'eat' those they have left in dissidence land. So, do honour El Hadj and you will win him to your cause; do show respect for his claws that will be more useful to you than dangerous for their prey. Entertain the small by sending them to the barud and thus, you will have peace, tranquility and even more submissions. As to your ideas of equity, equality and uprightness, they are perhaps relevant in the areas where you have set order, but these are things which have no relevance whatsoever in the war zone. Mentioning their right now would be as unwise as telling 'Ait 'Ari' (the people of the mountain) that as of the day of their submission, they will have to forsake their gandouras for greatcoats.

The officer was about to respond to his auxiliary's tirade when a group of figures loomed in the distance in the direction of Sidi Sa'id.

- *'Here they come' the Shawush instantly announced.*

Indeed, as the figures gradually drew nearer, the lookouts quickly recognised Taybi who, arm in hand, speeded up toward the familiar twists and turns.

What then occurred in Captain Alain's mind? Only those who lived through such moments could imagine. An intense emotion gripped him and his joy was immense. He, at last, had reached the end of all his efforts and this was to be his first success. He had broken through the mountain, in the person of one its most fearsome war chiefs who had, at long last, been conquered. This was not the real victory, for he still had to negotiate and he was not certain whether the last word would go to reason. But, there was going to be endless talking and, when one reached this point with the Berber notables, the cause was half won. And, even though the agreement was not going to be concluded that evening, contact would be maintained, the mountain would cease to be a mystery and there would be other informers than vulgar shepherds.

As he was, thus, absorbed in his optimistic thoughts, the officer had gone back to his living-room, leaving to the Shawush the task of receiving the newcomers and leading them to him. Besides, Lahsen as impatient and as delighted at the event as his chief, had not waited behind the wall. Tumbling down the dangerous steps of the rustic stairway, he had opened the little door that looked out to the bled, spread open the thorn hedge which protected it and, with his rifle loaded, he had gone out to meet the unsubdued.

- *Is that you, you son of a dog?, he shouted at Taybi, manipulating his breech as soon as he had made a few steps. Not in the least taking offence at such welcome which, given the circumstances, could not be considered abusive, quite the contrary in fact, Taybi replied, using the same tone:*

- *It's me you abulkhir (boar)*

- *You have been playing hard-to-get, haven't you dear friend? Anyone would think you have brought us a new bride and that you are so sure to impress that you don't even feel the need to hurry a little. And yet, we are about to fall asleep.*

El Hadj then spoke, and delighted as he was to find himself facing a stout-hearted opponent he had known for a long time and whom he admired like everybody else, he said to the Shawush:

- Is this your bedtime, Lahsen? Didn't you use to be a 'tir ellil' (night bird) and didn't you have darkness as a thada (ally)?

- *I wouldn't deny it, El Hadj, but I have grown old with the rumis. I have had to introduce discipline even in my sleep. Now, you understand, I have a watch and have learnt to measure my time as though each minute was worth its weight in gold. I go to sleep and wake up at fixed times and, it seems that this is good for your health. But still, tonight...*

- *I feel sincerely sorry for you, Lahsen, but this is my first visit and you know as well as I do that we don't come to see your friend during the daylight. Besides, if I am not mistaken, there are evenings when you willingly forget your watch. The Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa already know a thing or two about it...*

- *They are not the only ones. Still, that will not prevent you from really enjoying discipline and order like me, when you become Qaid... my Qaid.*

- *When that happens, don't you worry, I'll spare you.*

- *Thank you Sidi⁽¹⁾ El Hadj. I couldn't expect more of your well known generosity. However, I advise that you don't waste more time and that you spur on, for the position is a well-sought for one and I know one of your brothers...*

- *Who do you mean?*

- *Nobody, nobody. With all this chattering, I will end up talking nonsense. Do follow me, for I cannot trust even this barbed wire that is listening to us...*

- *I beg you Lahsen, for the sake of our friendship, tell me whether others than me have already been here...*

- *By all means, they have. This pathway belongs to everybody and the house at its end is the house of God. However, this should not, in any way, upset you. For your standing will be even more obvious to the Captain. Still, I would like to venture a piece of advice my friend: you'd better buy a watch from the Greek of the post and check it often, so as not to miss the time marked by God Almighty. But I think you are wrong not to trust me...*

As he was better informed than 'Aysha Ahmed concerning what awaited him at the post thanks to Taybi, El Hadj did not show any sign of surprise when he was ushered to the officer. The latter stood up when El Hadj entered, and held out his hand as a sign of welcome. Then, he invited him to sit opposite

(1) My lord, Sir. In this case, the Shawush is being ironical for the title is reserved only to religious personalities and El Hadj, a simple Berber, is not entitled to it.

him for the meal, while the Shawush, Taybi and the other companions of his unsubdued guest were settling at a respectful distance from their chiefs, or preparing to carry out the duties of otherwise indiscrete servants.

Then, came the time for small talk concerning the rain, the good weather, the state of crops and the fights which members of the audience had participated in. Of course, Shawush Lahsen did make a point of showering the honorable guests with pointed remarks, thus attracting reciprocal impish retorts and creating a nice atmosphere for the serious talk that was to follow. Eventually, having emptied the last cup of tea, and following a signal to his men from the Captain, the officer, El Hadj and the Shawush were left on their own and they got on to the purpose of the visit!

As we are well aware of such purpose, there is no need to dwell too much on it. Let's just say that the discussion lasted for an hour and materialized in a perfect understanding between the two new friends, that is in a real secret alliance.

Thereupon, the officer took the working tools that he used in such circumstances and started recording, one by one, and from the authoritative mouth of his guest, a number of specific facts concerning the unsubdued bled. To this effect, he spread on a low table an enlarged version of the map of the Dir, and took out his mountain control kit. He asked for his gear made up of wooden cubes and multi-coloured strings which he usually used to make his informers indicate the situations of qsurs, rivers and pathways that could not be seen from the post.

Then, for more than an hour, the officer, his guest and the Shawush practiced *intelligence*, flat on their stomachs around the smoking lamp and the map. They went over everything for each tribe and for each of its fractions. They passed in review the situations of cultivation plots and pasture lands, the number of saddle horses, of weapons and mules, as well as the importance of grain reserves and defense favorable positions. They also reviewed the pathways likely to be used by an artillery column, fords on the different oueds, etc...

Then, they talked about the specific situation of each notable, his wealth, his family ties, and his degree of enmity towards the French.

Eventually, around two o'clock, having been perfectly informed on everything that he saw of importance in prediction for the operation of the following year, and having been convinced about the sincerity of the action of El Hadj, the officer decided to leave his guest. He, therefore, had a last cup

of tea served, to the disappointment of the Shawush who was getting more and more worried about the fate of Hamu U Melluk who was still at Buhara.

Then, slowly, he moved to his safe, took five bags of hassani duros and handed them to the unsubdued. *Here, take this so that you can make a few gifts to people around you. You have here one thousand duros, that is seven thousand French francs at the current rate. This is only a beginning and now it's up to you to deserve more...*

El Hadj took the bags, felt their weight and thanked the officer, in a very satisfied tone. Then, he asked for his big woolen bag that had been left hanging to his saddle to be fetched, as it was impossible for him to carry the heavy load in his leather bag.

Mischievous as ever, the Shawush made a point of emphasizing his chief's generosity: *It's obvious that the first person you met this morning was neither one-eyed nor albino⁽¹⁾. Your luck is unbelievable! If the Captain were not so busy at the moment, he would tell you that for the rumis that would be a matter for concern. But, you would not understand. Anyway, my Qaid, you are carrying there an amount that your impetuous Lahsen has never dreamed of having one day. I do hope you won't use it to arm your brothers against us...*

- *So, you still hold a good opinion of me, don't you?*

- *No, a very bad one indeed.*

- *What does that mean?*

- *It means that I would be much obliged to you if you don't compel me to come and wake you up one night in your tent at the sound of 'bibi' (V.B. grenades).*

- *Don't you worry. I gave my word and you know that I always keep my promises.*

- *That, we will see. After all, you are the only one who stands to gain, for as far as I am concerned...*

- *Ok, keep complaining, you are always close to the mighty, dipping as you please into his arm stocks and his coffers. You make war and peace as you please...*

(1) The belief has it that a morning meeting with a one-eyed person or an albino brings bad luck.

The Shawush smiled at so much gullibility, pondering about his nine-franc daily wage, and about the change that he was required to give when centimes made his chief's accounts complicated, and still about many more *details*. However, he immediately realized that he would only be demeaning himself in the eyes of the unsubdued by disabusing him. It is, thus, with conviction that he replied:

- *By all means, you are right. It's now up to you to take advantage of all this in your turn, whenever you wish. As a matter of fact, this office would suit you much better than me if you took it up, for you are cut to be a Qaid.*

- *But, 'he' hasn't promised me anything in this respect.*

- *Not to worry! The way you were received counts better than a hundred promises. He couldn't give you the Qaid stamp seal⁽¹⁾, at your first visit, could he?*

- *That's true, but you have not yet told me who his other friends from the mountain are. I need to be informed.*

- *What good would that be to you? Besides, what would you, yourself, say if we gave away your name to our other friends? So, don't insist, you won't learn anything from me. This house is a soul of discretion, as the Captain says, and you should be glad about it as it concerns your own safety.*

The qsar of Buhara where Hamu U Melluk was waiting for the time to appear at the post was hardly four kilometers away. When he got there that evening, and realizing the derelict state in which the houses of Ait Ya'qub his brothers, were, Hamu had a pang of anguish and was overcome by an immense sadness. However, while going through the qsars one by one, with extreme care, he understood that if the rain had caused some damage to the shale terraces that had not been maintained since the tribe's flight, no destruction had been voluntarily caused by the rumi who frequently sent his cavalry to the pastures or on patrol in the neighborhood.

He went as far as the spring and walked around the hedges that surrounded the little gardens where melons and water melons grew which had come from nowhere. He climbed to the top of the nearby hill that dominated the area, lay down against a clump of jujube beside his companions and, facing the French construction which was made excessively big by the moon, he was lost in his thoughts.

(1) As soon as a Qaid is appointed, the sultan has a seal made for him to make his letters authentic.

From time to time, a sigh as long as a sob broke the silence. Eventually, unable to stand the situation anymore, he spoke in a low voice, so low that is sounded like a confession: *This, my children, is the reason why the Christian is superior to us, and which proves that God guides his actions and will insure his success. Having within reach his enemies' houses, he has not harmed them. The fig trees of Ait Tanammast are still there; the little marabout is intact and the graves around the village have not been touched. Don't you think that such generosity on the part of a man who is so powerful is wonderful? If they had been in his position, the Berbers would have used their victory to wreck and burn everything. They would have dug up the dead and left them for jackals. This is perhaps the reason, and because of our cruelty to the lifeless objects, that God has abandoned us and darkened our spirit. He has even deprived us of a flag, as though we were unworthy of defending it. And, all these black marabouts who have come from the Sahara and brought us only calamity keep deceiving us by continuously urging us to resist to the Christian. Besides, they know quite well what they are doing, these sinister men who hide at home when there is danger and who lead our columns only when we have to flee or take shelter.*

- *Do not blaspheme, oh uncle Hamu. There is something good about igurramen, they urge us to remember that we are Muslims and to serve the prophet.*

- *Shut up, son. You are hardly a man and little do you know. You haven't as yet learnt to love the spot of land where you were born, and to suffer when you are estranged from it. If only you knew all the nice memories that this night has recalled to my mind...Born behind that hillock over there, towards Wawumana, that is where I have lived moments so wonderful that, when I think back to them, the tears fill my eyes. Everything there contributed to love life. It's there that I rode my first horse, that I took part in my first fight, against Ait Bu Melal, that I founded my 'tent'. That is when my son Ahmed was born and that I heard him babble his first words. That is where my father is lying for his eternal rest, close to us, in this plain...*

- *All right, but when you were so happy, we were free and our country had only the Muslims as masters, whereas today...*

- *Certainly you are right, what made us love this land was the freedom that we enjoyed. But we must be able to submit to the will of God and lay down arms when everything points to the fact that they have become useless. I do love this freedom that you are talking about more than you do, my son, and*

nobody will suffer as much as I do when I am deprived of it. In times past, I was warlord, and my power was so great; I used to make all decisions and people used to come from far away places to consult with me. When old Muha U Hamu was in need of allies, I was the first he came to. Now, I am talking from experience and the time of sacrifice has come and nobody will be able to defer it. Listen to this muffled sound, which you can hear coming from the west. It is the Christian's gun thundering against Ait Wirra. Already the Imhiwash have got out of their depth; they have evacuated their Azaghar and taken refuge in the Djebel Wangnoussen, although a not so hospitable place. The children of Muha U Sa'id have betrayed their cause with certain consent, although unconfessed, from their father. Tomorrow, the Ait Bu Melal, in their turn, will flee before the French column, exposing our country while waiting to submit and join their rifles to those of the rumi, thus ruining and exterminating us. Here, in our tribe, the worm (abakhou) is in the fruit and the French post is, every evening, invaded by a horde of informers and visitors in search for money and honors. How can you advise me to remain indifferent to all this? I can't. That would amount to a crime against myself and against my brothers. I am used to always being first and will not accept to have, some day, to bow before El Hadj, Muha U 'Ali Ujhayn or Bassu U Abderrahim. I don't want to see you become slave to an enemy. I don't want my duwar to exist only for the purpose of fattening up my rivals, finally...As to freedom, others than us have lost it without this leading to their death. The children of Zayani, who were equaled by none in bravery, pride and power before the Christian's arrival, are now beside the rumi, which goes to say that being there is not so bad. We will do the same, with the will of God, master of men and things...

- We will do as you wish. You are our father, our chief and our guide, and we do know that if you take us to the Christian, it's because there is no other way.

- Thank you children, and may God be with us.

Again, the post where Hamu U Melluk and his companions had been received was in turmoil. But, the new visitors did not like complications and what they were there for was simple and specific:

- We know that the column is moving towards our country and we want to submit to you before we are compelled by arms. Don't you believe that this is cowardice on our part; you know that the Ait Ya'qub are the bravest warriors in our tribe, but, we are wise people and we consider it useless to spill blood again. What are the conditions for our submission?

- *That you join our lines with your families, your tents and your herds. That you settle near the Wawumana post not far from your land and that you conform to everything I will tell you for your own good and that of your children.*

- *Obviously, all this is easy if you consent to give us a few rifles and cartridges for the disengagement day. For, the least movement towards your posts on our part will mobilize the whole mountain against us.*

- *I would rather take on me to protect your decampment with my cavalry and my guns. We will decide on the day and time...*

- *That's impossible, for if every one of our moves is monitored, yours are too, even more so. You wouldn't be able to reach us before the enemy is already in our duwars. All we are asking for is four rifles to arm those of us who aren't, and about a thousand cartridges. On the fixed day, sunset will find us among your people. As to your horsemen, all you have to do is to have them stationed at Wawumana so that they can receive us and come to our rescue at the first shots, or, in case we call for help, by lighting two blazes toward the ruins of the qsar of Tighbula.*

- *I am willing to trust you with rifles and ammunition, but it's not one of my habits to show so much trust without guarantees.*

- *I will send you my son as a hostage. I can't give you more.*

- *Most certainly.*

- *Then, what will you do with me when I submit? Without doubt, you know who I am.*

- *I know that you are one of the best notables of your tribe and I duly appreciate your wisdom. I will, therefore, reward you as fit.*

- *I want to be Qaid.*

- *Your brothers will have no chief but you.*

Chapter XV : Perplexity

At day break, the Captain was up, in spite of the fatigue caused by the events of the past few days. As a matter of fact, he was so preoccupied that he hardly got any sleep.

Of course, the success achieved on the previous day was the kind an intelligence officer could be proud of, but, contrary to his expectations it did not really procure him any joy. El Hadj 'Ali and Hamu U Melluk seemed rather well disposed towards him, but it was precisely the fact that they had demonstrated so much haste in pledging their support that one could wonder if on the appointed date, they would remember and keep their promises. Now, the operations carried out by the Freydenberg column were drawing to an end in Ait Wirra territory, and, in two or three weeks at the most, the dauntless chief would be arriving in Ait Ishaq land. And before proceeding with the pacification of the Ishqern Dir, he would most certainly require specific information about the intentions of its occupants. That was, without doubt, the best way to compromise the tribe in the eyes of its neighbors. However, the group had not committed itself in any way and only two of its notables, acting on an individual basis, had manifested a predisposition to make peace. It was then likely that they would take up arms after our soldiers' crossing and thus, cause us a lot of trouble. Should he, on the contrary, recommend ignoring the engaged negotiations and consider everybody as enemies? Or, should he advocate war as the safest and quickest way to obtain peace in a country whose organization the post chief was looking forward to? In a word, this meant letting the campaign plan set up by the Staff Headquarters take its due course.

It meant admitting the futility of the political work that had been accomplished, therefore, sanctioning the incompetence of the very person who had been entrusted with such work. That, more importantly, also meant taking the risk of jeopardizing all the efforts of El Hadj 'Ali and imposing to both troops and unsubdued fighting and losses that could possibly have been avoided.

The issue of the prisoners was no less an embarrassing matter for the officer. The Ait Yaqub U 'Ayssa Djema'a was about to come and he hadn't made a decision yet. Freeing the captives was an attractive solution since now he had

allies in the mountain. That was, once more, an opportunity for him to show how kind and generous he was, and perhaps that would win him the sympathy of the prisoners' parents at a moment when his duty precisely consisted in neutralizing his opponents as much as possible. However; he had been advised not to take such measure for its potentially hypothetical benefits, by his entourage, including the unsubdued who regularly visited the post. It was, in any way the kind of measure that would seriously displease the mokhaznis who had been active in the capture of the prisoners, just as it would dampen their zeal and their ardour during the upcoming engagements, unless they decided not to make any prisoners any more and to kill them without pity on the battlefield, because of their reluctance to put up a poor fight, and upon tacit agreement between them.

These definitely were serious problems for a man who wanted a military success for his country, but who also made it a point of honor to make sure that, whenever possible, such success did not bring about a multiplicity of mourning and destruction to the opposing side.

This is because Captain Alain was of the kind of French whom Paul Odinet qualified, in one of his most brilliant newspaper articles as the *horr*, that is the pure. He had been trained at the most distressing national ordeals, and he was still suffering from the very recent profanation of his own motherland by the most execrable invaders. He, therefore, professed respect at its highest degree to the small Berber people who, tribe after tribe, fraction after fraction, and even family after family, had cheerfully sacrificed themselves for the sake of their independence. And, given that the mission undertaken by his country in this backward land had found in him a most sincere advocate, nothing on earth could make him accept that unnecessary harm would be caused to those who still refused to listen to his friendly advice.

Thus, he felt a great embarrassment and, having to inform his chief, he was most reluctant to conclude, and thought: *I need to reflect further on how to write up my report and, to this aim, I must get away for a few days from this area. For, while here, I feel I am too much under the grip of my environment to really have my free will. My informants, being so eager to attract to them an authority and force which will provide them with prestige, and my mokhaznis so greedy for plundering, revenge and honor, all conspire together to distort my ideas and impose rather suspect conceptions. As a matter of fact, they have managed so well to alter my mentality that I had to fly over this post to realize that this tiny bit of land where I have been posted is not the 'centre*

of the universe' as I started believing, and that the small barley and fodder beet fields I gaze at every day from my observatory are nothing like the riches of Lombardy which lent speed to the soldiers of Bonaparte. I am, therefore, going to ask for permission to spend a few days in Casablanca, in order to take stock and be able to assess the situation in a more sound way. But, as my usual advisers need a change of air as much as I do, I will take both Shawush Lahsen and his acolyte Mustapha with me; they will only be too glad to get to know a big city.

No sooner said than done.

The district commander, a high officer who had been trained in the precepts of the good old African school, was well aware of matters in the bled and, for the good morale of his officers, was not against a little absconding to the seaside. He, therefore, heartily granted the requested leave of absence by telephone.

He did even better, and, knowing that the post lacked any means of transport, he dispatched the army service car, with permission to use it until the first centre likely to provide some kind of car hire service.

Preparations for the departure were quick as far as the officer was concerned: a soldier's suitcase is easily packed when getting ready to go to '*civilized places*' where you have to renew your wardrobe.

However, for the Shawush and for the sergeant, that was a longer business. First of all, the two warriors could hardly believe their luck. This was not because they appreciated the delight of the trip they were about to make at its real value; they could hardly imagine what we had already achieved in the home front and, they were not in a hurry to know about it. For, up until then, only the most important personalities had been allowed or invited to leave the Zayan area for pleasure, and the two modest auxiliaries had never thought that one day, in their turn, they would be granted the eminent favor to walk their lice in Lahsen's own words, under the guidance of their French chief. Therefore, they had, in the first place, to be convinced that this was no taqebbat (joke) and that they had to quickly get ready, unless they preferred to leave their places to others.

Then, the question of funds came up. Lahsen and Mustapha, who were used to living from hand to mouth, had to admit that they did not have a penny for such an unexpected trip. The officer had, of course told them that he was going

to take care of all the travel expenses, but no Berber would dare go to town, that is to a suq, without bringing back new clothes and cheap junk for his tent.

- We can well see, the Shawush explained to his chief that you are not married and that you can thus manage to spare yourself quite a lot of worry. You are ready for everything in the wink of an eye. As to me, I have not been as wise as you are, and, traveling anywhere is rather difficult for me, and each visit I make to the suq means laborious calculations. Can you imagine that I have three wives, the most terrible of whom is Fatma Hamu who weighs 150 kilos at the Greek's weighing machine and whose izar is large enough for five 'Mrs Mustaphas'? I therefore, need a lot of money for the trip and, I am asking you not to hurry me too much as I may have to take some of my animals to the post shopkeeper. Why didn't you tell me about this yesterday? I would most certainly have found a way to strangle El Hadj 'Ali as he was leaving the post, and would have taken my equitable share of the fortune you bestowed on him...

- I knew you could do it, you old rascal. And that is the very reason why I didn't tell you anything. Still, don't waste time anymore and stop talking, and be ready in two hours. Don't let them cheat you when you sell your sheep.

- Don't you worry there. The Greek man is clever but he found a match a long time ago in yours truly. I will fob him all my 'imekkurta' (old sheep in bad condition) and will swear by Sidi Bu Ifadden (a marabout of pure imagination) that only lack of grass has made them so skinny.

- I am pretty doubtful about the success of your wicked calculations, and there is a good chance that you will be taken to court for having sold animals due to die in a few days.

- Well! If justice interferes with the Greeks' affairs, I am sure that ours will soon fizzle out here. There is much fiddling in his accounts relating to credit sales that he will be last to talk about courts of justice, whatever happens to him. Let me deal with him as I see and everything will be all right.

Two hours elapsed in an atmosphere of general excitement. And of course, the quick and noisy mobilization of twenty horsemen, who were supposed to insure the safety of the car coming from Khenifra, had attracted to the Turgilal post plateau, the whole garrison and all the population of the goumiers' and mokhaznis' duwars.

As the event was a great one indeed, commentaries went on in an indescribable hubbub.

In the goumiers' clan, -- they were military after all, weren't they?--, everybody was somewhat discrete, because the officers were so close by.

Still, gossip was going on relentlessly among the mokhaznis and their wives who were squatting against the thorn hedge, and daring to advance the most absurd and the most unbelievable hypotheses concerning the unexpected trip. Some thought it quite normal that the officer should take a few days of leave of absence; as a matter of fact, this happened once a year. They also believed that it was normal that he should take his two main auxiliaries with him. However, this explanation, which was too simple for them, could not satisfy everybody. The most shrewd amongst them, of whom crowds always abound, claimed that the officer had received a very important visitor the night before. After all, there are no secrets in Berberland! In fact, they were convinced that he was going to Khenifra to ask for an immediate dispatching of the column to the area. Others attested that the Captain had been summoned by the District Commander who had admonished him for not having immediately released the Ishqern captives. Finally, the women had let their imagination wander, earnestly or intent on worrying the families of the two non-commissioned officers who had been bestowed with the honor of accompanying the hakem. They went so far as to insinuate that Lahsen and Mustapha, having in the past been members of the Ait U 'Aydi clan, which was now under suspicion, were being taken straight to prison.

One of the women, an old shrew, *'furrowed'* as the mokhaznis said like *the waters of an aguelman⁽¹⁾ on a stormy day*, had slyly gone into Shawush Lahsen 's house and dripped her poison, saying:

- *Oh, my poor sisters, we do pity you. Your husbands did not commit any wrong doings. They fought for the rumi and now, look, they are being taken to the Christian's hell like criminals. Don't let them go, if you do, you will never see them again. Don't you trust the rumi...*

Lahsen's three wives who were busy gathering some provisions for the road, tried in the first place to defend the post chief whose earnest affection for their husbands they acknowledged. However, their confidence gradually weakened and was substituted by a deadly anxiety which paralyzed their arms and legs.

- *Who told you about prison aunt 'Aysha?*

(1) Lake, pond.

- *Everybody is talking about it, all the horsemen. There, look at them next to Mustapha's duwar, they are filled with consternation, for they love the brave Lahsen who knows so well how to lead them to combat.*

- *Well, what does Fatma 'Assu, Mustapha's wife say about this?*

- *Well, she knows at least as well as we do what's awaiting her husband, but you know that she believes everything the Captain says; just as Mustapha does. Besides, she is not a real family daughter (illis lasel) like you three, and her husband's imprisonment would leave her totally indifferent. After him, there will always be someone else...*

The three women then started crying and bushyar (light bread prepared in a few minutes) was left to burn. At the same time, a few more gossips came in to add their tears to those of the tent, so much so that when Lahsen arrived home to say good bye, he felt as though he was entering a house where a funeral was being celebrated.

He asked for explanations but didn't get any.

Squatting by the middle pole of the kheyma, his wives who had been left alone when he appeared kept crying and wailing. Their eyes looked like torrents with tears.

- *Well then, you daughters of sin, would you tell me what is it that is making you cry? It most certainly is not the short four day's absence which is turning you into this state. I well know how much you love me, but, please let's not be ridiculous.*

However, their crying did not stop.

Then, Lahsen who was pressed by time resorted to extreme measures. He violently seized the oldest of his wives by the hand and pushed her towards the fire place where the bread was already burning: *Here, keep an eye on this, you horrible bitch, if you don't want me to bury you alive today.* Then, he moved to the second one and, with a kick he made her sit up: *Go and fetch my burnous, my rifle and my cartridges and do shut up.* He did bother about the third one who was only twelve and whom he had just brought in (married). As a matter of fact, she was so scared that she stood up without waiting to be told and, shaking, she started busying herself at anything.

A few minutes later, our guy who was at last ready, left his tent without bothering any more about his wives. He walked to the car which had arrived

without mishap. He first settled Mustapha and the Captain's suitcase in the back of the car and flicked off, with the pan of his burnous, the seat reserved for the officer by the driver. He then had his chief informed that all was set and majestically like *the Pasha of Khenifra*, he settled himself next to his friend while the goumiers and mokhaznis had surrounded the car, showering him with sarcastic remarks:

- *Hold on tight Lahsen; the car is not a donkey; make sure you don't take city dwellers for Shleuhs⁽¹⁾. If you do, you will regret it.*

This was said by one of his Arab friends who served in the goum.

- *Don't you worry about me, very dear Qaddur. Men of a good breed are always good horsemen. As to your brothers, we are at last going to see them, for they are very scarce in our region where air, without doubt, is too unhealthy for their fragile hearts. Don't you have a sister in Berreshid, and wouldn't you like me to stop and say hello to her? I'm sure she will be delighted to have news of you.*

- *I don't have a sister, and if I had one, I would do better than send her a monkey like you.*

- *What, a monkey like me? Have you looked at your face in a mirror? Here is one for you, do admire your muka (owl) face, your horrible teeth blackened by tobacco and your toad eyes. You will then understand why the arrival of a fine male like me in your family will most certainly improve your breed which does need improving!*

Immediately, two clans formed: that of the Arabs, almost all goumiers, and that of the Berbers of the Makhzen, each supporting their respective clansman using nasty jokes. Meanwhile, Lahsen had called up to his rescue the few French words that he had managed to learn and was making recommendations to the young Parisian whom destiny had sent him as a chauffeur that day:

- *Tell me, friend, me I have three wives: 90, 75, 65 (one fat, one average, and one small, in comparison with canons of those calibers). You be careful with the track, I don't want to kick the bucket!*

- *Don't you worry, ugly thing, we'll take care of your skin.*

Although this was language that he could not understand, Lahsen turned to Mustapha and knowingly, he confided that the chauffeur was really nice:

(1) Berbers. The word is used in the Middle Atlas only with a pejorative connotation, people concerned prefer Imazighen.

- Did you notice how kindly he has answered me? If we had a Berber driver, he would have most certainly insulted us. These French are really decent folks. The thing is, you are really lucky to be traveling with as good an interpreter as me...

- It's not here that I will really appreciate your interpreting skills. Wait until we get to Dar Beida⁽¹⁾ where they say that there are only French people in the streets. To tell you the truth, I am rather worried. What shall we eat when we are there? Pork?

- Now, stop getting me down. The Captain will be with us and there is no need to be worried about getting hungry. As to pork, there was a time when your own ancestors did not turn up their nose at it. Didn't you take your share of the boar killed at Beni Khelil the other day? Of course, you must have baptized it as a lamb for Fatma 'Assu. By the way, tell me, wouldn't your anxiety be caused by the fact that you are leaving behind a young and beautiful wife and a tent open to all winds?

- As to that, I think you are more to be pitied than I am. Your tent needs at least as much defending as mine and you are running three times as many risks as I am.

- No, only twice as no one will want my 90 who is out of work and good for retirement. Besides, I don't really care what happens to me. The most important is that it is not a goumier...

- I recommended that negroes are strictly avoided, although I know that there are none here.

With this, the Captain arrived, followed by the officer who was supposed to take over the command of the post.

Immediately, the goumiers and mokhaznis moved back a few steps and quickly lined up behind the non-commissioned officers.

After the chief had made a few recommendations and given a handshake to the NCO's, the car started, groaning from all parts, and drove along the line of troops and auxiliaries who were standing motionless in a fine salute, while sobs were again saddening the tent of Shawush Lahsen, two hundred meters away.

The Shawush, having distributed protective and triumphant bonjour, bonjour, to his comrades who had stayed behind to keep an eye on the monkeys on the other side, was now busy trying to find a comfortable position in the hopping banger which was about to put through the mill his ribs and severely test his faith in the comfort that was being offered to him.

(1) Casablanca

Chapter XVI : A Brave New World

What struck the Berbers from the Zayan region most when they arrived in the indigenous towns of the plain was the whiteness of houses, their aligning and the relative width of their streets, used as they were to their red and shapeless qsurs, which, in fact, they rarely inhabited, living in a jumble with their animals in the manure of duwars. And, being indifferent to the most basic rules of hygiene, the care that city dwellers generally took in living comfortably and cleanly never failed to attract their attention. The fountains, with their marvelous mosaic decorations, the fine way in which the *qissayia*⁽¹⁾ shops were kept, the layout of displays, the religious silence of the shoppers, in a word everything that contrasted with the disorder and the noise of the mountain suqs, gave them the impression of having been carried away to a new world to which they were related only by the cult of the same prophet.

The fact that women did not use to go out without a veil still emphasized in the Imazighen's eyes the gap that separated them from their coreligionists.

However, there was no mountain man who did not consider himself superior to the best among his fellow creatures from the plain. Besides, although the Berbers willingly paid homage to the skill of the merchants and Arab, Berber or Jewish craftsmen who supplied them with cotton cloth, sugar, tea and other objects which they were unable to get or manufacture themselves, they still demonstrated neither gratitude nor consideration to these people. The reason for this was that, for them, only war counted, with its risks and its dangers which gave life its spice. And, anyone who shut himself up between the walls of a city or a qsar, particularly with the purpose of trading, instead of leading an enthralling life in a tent, deserved only indifference and even contempt. Therefore, nothing was more surprising, at the beginning of the conquest, than the sight of Berbers strolling along the streets of a town during market days.

You could see them walking in the streets and between the shops as though they were in conquered land. They were contemptuous and arrogant, and they carried their contempt for the merchants to the extent of entering the *qissaryas* on horse back. When their attention was attracted by some item, they used to

(1) Quarters reserved for traders of silk and other luxury goods.

point at it with the end of their rifle for the merchant who was squatting in the back of his shop. In this case, they hardly condescended to pronounce the few words necessary for concluding the transaction. Moreover, the two sides never uttered useless words or indulged in unnecessary politeness. Both were there respectively to defend their goods or their money, not to exchange polite remarks which would, anyway, be sheer hypocrisy. Doubtless, bargaining took place because fixed prices were unknown in the country.

However, when bargaining was done, it was done in a bitter tone, the merchants were never granted the honor of insisting more than necessary for the deal to be concluded. When they finished, whether the transaction was concluded or not, they parted coldly, with a harsh look, and with the merchant cursing the savageness of his customers who, in their turn, could hardly hold the curse and threat which were on their lips and which were meant for the spice merchants. When in the street, the mountain men remained true to themselves, instinctively evading the *Ait Waskar*⁽¹⁾ and keeping aloof in small groups in the outskirts of the village to eat their bread and onion among brothers, while commenting on the news. Each tribe had its own rallying point where people gathered for the return home.

As to availing themselves of the opportunity of their trip to the town to pay a visit to the public Moorish bath or to pray in the magnificent mosque, they didn't even think about it as they felt total strangers to everything there.

Today, the feelings of both populations have not changed in any way. The city dwellers remain, in the eyes of the Berbers, men without courage. The city dwellers, on their part, have always considered the men from the bled as ragged and without manners. However, thanks to the peace that has now prevailed and more particularly to the easy communication which makes possible different ways of contact, relationships have become heartier, at least in appearance. And, although both sides still denigrate each other for trivia, the tendency toward coming together is more and more obvious, announcing an imminent unity of all the peoples of the Empire under the aegis of France.

When they approached Buja'd, Lahsen and Mustapha, who were now sporting all their decorations, expected to see the locals literally kneel at the feet of their chief, as a sign of gratitude for the guard that he was keeping at Turgilal and the security that he thus provided to the hinterland. To their mind, a man as fearsome as the Captain who stroke fear in the whole region and who

(1) People from the plain

held in check tribes as unruly as the Ishqern and even the Ait Bu Melal, was entitled to full consideration. After all, it was thanks to his actions and his vigilance that the people of Buja'd could now live in peace and grow rich. Therefore, ignoring the passage of the officer and his mokhaznis and failing to demonstrate signs of gratitude to them would amount to forgetting the least of their duties. The hakem of the place himself, to whom the devotion of the vanguard warriors spared all sorts of worries, would most certainly not fail to heartily welcome his comrade and his retinue and generously entertain them. All the more so since that retinue was made up of two matchless firebrands, the flower of the Dir...

However, to their amazement, no matter how loud and how many times the Parisian sounded his horn, no one showed any concern in the white city, the inhabitants swarmed about in the streets but not one gave a hint of the military salute with which even the unsubdued instinctively honor the officers when they visit them in the front posts. A crowd of women and children surrounded a wailing noria on one of the road sides, but not one of the little boys moved towards the glorious car to welcome it with one of the usual gay bonjour. Perhaps it was the cursed greatcoat that concealed to the passers-by the chief's decorations and his companions' medals and, real enthusiasm was left for later when the travelers would get off the car to take some rest. No, that wasn't it, for even when they were outside the car, the two warriors failed to raise any kind of admiration and it was in vain that Lahsen, standing behind the Captain, strived to stimulate the city dwellers' politeness with a desperate mimic. Besides, and that was what epitomized the stupefaction of the Shawush, the officer who would in other circumstances have reacted to the people's indifference, did not even notice it here. In fact, having dismissed the driver who had to go back to Khenifra, he walked to the Casablanca bus. As to the hakem and his mokhaznis, who were expected to offer the travelers at least a few glasses of tea, they failed to appear even at the windows of the great building which was supposed to be their bureau.

The brand new bus was there, frantic in its lemon yellow robe. Its heavy mass literally crushed the small private cars which had been lined up by a CTM competitor close to the bus so that they could compete for passengers. A gloomy crowd in a hurry bustled around the vehicles whose merits were being bellowed out by some kids who were daubed with shoeshine and grease. Making a choice was a real ordeal as some twenty hands were simultaneously held towards you to carry luggage mister and keep a good seat for you. You

were pulled from all sides, jostled and molested by tyrannical vengeance. People pushed each other, got annoyed and even threatened with both hand and voice, while some fat Jewish slatterns were thrown into a panic and moaned, threatening to call the police, which was no use. The *erkub square*⁽¹⁾ where vehicles loaded passengers in fact belonged to the little ragged touts who got five sous for every ticket they managed to place, particularly as the blasé duty agent had long before given up and decided to let things go.

So, the Captain himself, who was a chosen victim and a most resigned one, decided that the best thing to do was to emulate the policeman's attitude and entrust himself to the strongest among the assailants, who would know how to protect his prey and save his hand-bag. What's more, his savior was a clever and intelligent fellow, just like his fellow men who learned to fight at birth. Realizing that the officer was the kind of man who was able to manage on his own and that in fact, he was using his services only out of charity, he decided to reward him by taking care of his sahebs (friends, companions) who walked close behind him and who looked rather lost. And, in less time than Lahsen and Mustapha took to find their way out of the confusion, where their chief himself had given in, they were shoved in the beautiful yellow house and comfortably sat on the finest seats.

The beautiful buses on our Moroccan roads should be thanked forever for their services and their contribution to the pacification of the country. Majestic and audacious, they never drew back from danger nor toil. As soon as arms had been laid down, somewhere in the unsubdued areas, they soon got there, regardless of the risks of potential accidents, bringing life and the lure of big towns. Their drivers were not always polite towards our new friends and, their graisseurs (conductors), natives who had learnt to deal efficiently with engines and gear boxes, showed even less consideration for their less advanced coreligionists.

On the other hand, they had been observed often enough, stopping on their way to pick up a good old woman in tatters who did not even dare to ask. They had also been often exposed to vehement protests by European passengers who were in a hurry, for having dared to stop for a minute to allow a native to get off when they got near his gurbi. That is why they were loved and blessed everywhere they happened to go in the Moroccan countryside. By shortening distances, they made obvious and more material another form of the power of

(1) Bus station

the French in the eyes of their former opponents, a form of power that was yet more captivating, than their most sophisticated weapons. The reason is that the buses broadened outlooks and transformed the way of life, through making obvious to those who still ignored it, that there was more and better things than the small fields for which they had fought, and more and better things than everything that constituted the potentially basic equipment that existed in the advanced zone. The railway was trying hard to supplant buses, but it was a prisoner of its rails and a slave to its departure and arrival times. It was interested only in the cities and strayed away from them only very slowly. In any way, buses were the first to unwrinkle Mustapha's gloomy face; they made him even forget the *seyed*⁽¹⁾ of Buja'd and his minarets. Lahsen himself spoke of nothing but the splendid leather of the bus seats which would make lovely belts and of the fabulous dimensions of the bus windows. As to the crowd's salute, the two Berbers had now stopped thinking about it, now that the master of the cars, a big Jew with golden teeth, had sat in front and behind them without any respect for the captain, a whole group of black *skullcaps*⁽²⁾, and lice *carriers*⁽³⁾

The area between Buja'd and the Shawiya, uniformly flat and desperately monotonous, looked unpleasant, not only for the Captain, but also for his companions who thought it was deadly boring and who were not embarrassed to say so. Of course, there was Oued Zem, a pleasant and restful oasis which had been set there by the genius of a chief who had audaciously planted it in the middle of perpend, as a gesture of pity for the worn out traveler. There was also Khouriga which was being disemboweled by insane people who took pleasure in bringing out to the light its insides and guts⁽⁴⁾. Finally, there was Qasba Ben Ahmed, swarming with little rumis, announcing a new era, which still could not make the mountain men who had been so painfully subdued forget the flatness of the landscape and the dry character of the countryside. Besides, the kind of life they led in contact with the unsubdued had made Lahsen and Mustapha lose interest in anything outside matters of war.

(1) Holy man's shrine

(2) Jews

(3) Natives

(4) Khouriga, which the natives called khouribga is the center of a phosphate seam which extends over 80 kilometers on one side and 50 over the other. Exploitation started in 1921 and production increased, starting from 1927, to reach 1,200,000 tons. (L'Empire Colonial Français, by Mr. Pierre Lyautey). The town of Khourigha, with a few thousand inhabitants, grew in a way that amazed the natives

As a result, what struck their attention most was that there wasn't a tree in the horizon to welcome a warrior stunned by the heat, there wasn't a rock to host the sentinels, nor was there a spring to help the wounded and moaning warriors under the pangs of thirst, or the lathering breathless steed. The bled country was made up only of grass that was in a hurry to dry, and of rare barley and wheat fields already being harvested by men who had come from the Sahara. Then, from time to time, a duwar appeared with indolent and lazy men, who let themselves live in complete disdain for the slightest effort.

Then, from time to time, lining the road and surrounded by edges covered with mud and mire, a duwar would appear. It was often inhabited by indolent and lazy men who let themselves live, in complete disdain for the slightest effort. Then, the two Zayan men would think about the goumiers who originated from these areas and who always spoke about their paradise; definitely, their comrades were content with very little indeed. How could they sing praises of this region which had not been bestowed by God with even a mountain? Above all, how could they prefer their own region to Um Er Rebi' which nature had showered with so many gifts? It will be so nice to confound them and get them to shut up at everyone of their boasting exaggerated statements.

However, there was a sudden change in the physical aspect of the land at the winding of the road and, as though to indicate a protest against the Zayans' insults, a profusion of rich landscape displayed itself before their eyes. It was still a huge plain, but a plain where everything attested to the power of man, the generosity of mother earth, and an intensity of life that amazed the mokhaznis and left them dreaming. One felt as though he was carried over an endless sea where the green color of pastures and spring crops alternated in perfect regularity with the silver yellow color of ripe barley. The houses painted immaculately white, shone like God's stars in all directions. They reminded the officer, who was no less interested than his companions, of the mahonia swing chairs of Algerian ports whose wings carried far in the distance everyday the first and last smile of the most beautiful sun on earth. Then, in that immense ocean, the bus moved along relentlessly, while thousands of soldier-like disciplined trees lined both sides of the roads. It drove along pathways and orchards in which activity ceaselessly grew before the bemused eyes of Lahsen and Mustapha. Where were the poor tracks of Tajemmu't and Sidi Lamin where you got bogged down at every step? Where were the shabby shacks of the Zawiya and the pathetic broad bean fields of Muha U 'Ali which

were considered the best? Here, the road was finer and cleaner than even the interior of Imahzen palaces.⁽¹⁾

Cars became more and more numerous, crossing and overtaking each other at such neck breaking speed that there was hardly time to admire them as they passed. The heavy lorries themselves, which in the Zayan region struggled and squeaked at every climb, drove past quietly as they though they considered it appropriate to do less well than the luxurious cars, their shining cousins. As to the long harnessed mazellas, precious auxiliaries to column chiefs, they did even dare venture outside the dusty pathways which were reserved to them at some distance from the road. Something really surprising was that, whereas the rumis were thus moved away from the precious tar band, which was their own work, whole caravans of native donkey-drivers cluttered it up, behaving like masters at the despair of the motorists whose speed was broken up at every moment.

However, the spell persisted at the constantly renewed sight of rich looking farms where everything was orderly and clean, and where everything displayed a discipline that reached even natural work. Trees in each fence were of the same height and shape and most certainly produced the same quantity of fruit. The vine stocks were lined in all directions and seemed to have pledged not to jut out over each other to grow together and to always wait for each other. Ears also did not grow as they pleased and they bent their heads in the same way under their mighty weight. As to the weeds, which constituted a plague for fields in Berberland, they were inexistent there. The dwarf palm-tree had disappeared from the landscape, just like the jujube tree and everything that was not productive and that might be harmful to the favorable growth of good crops. And, what most amazed the Zayan men was the appearance of the rail, with a phosphate train standing out in the horizon. At one end of the long convoy were three passenger carriages from which emerged many heads covered with different hats.

- Shawush Lahsen:

What's that?

- The Captain:

It's a train, that is carriages which move on iron bars.

- But, what is it that pushes the long snake? What is it that prevents the

(1) Muha U Hamu Zayani's family, masters of the Zayan country under the French occupation.

carriages from running into each other? What's that black smoke coming out at the front?

- I will explain everything tomorrow when we get to Casablanca. For the moment, all you have to remember is that you have here before you the most convenient and safest means of transport. There are carriages for transporting goods, each of which can take the load of 100 camels, and others for carrying passengers. A train like the one before us can carry more than 1500 people, that is a whole tribe.

- Why don't we have any like this in Khenifra?

- Well, because the region is not yet ready for that. But, it'll come.

- You are really amazing. You have given life to wood, to iron, and you have managed to enslave land and space...

- And water too, for this evening you will see the sea where we have real floating cities.

- In a way, there is only death that you have not been able to tame.

- Yes, and even then, we have not yet given in.

- And yet...in fact. How did you manage to transform this country in the way you did? For a whole hour now, I have been observing only wonderful things that the Muslims have certainly not bequeathed to us. Do explain to me how you managed to obtain such results when the natives who have been living here for centuries have not even been able to eat when they are hungry?

- We have been successful because we are hard-working and well-organized people, because, from father to son, we study and have uncovered the secrets of nature and we know how to exploit them. In our country, work begins at childhood and goes on until late old age because science is so broad that the duration of human life does not allow acquiring it in its entirety. What is more is that we are united, we stick together, not only among families or from one province to another, but also from one generation to the next. We are a nation.

- We, too, are a nation...

- No, you aren't. You have tribes which are independent from each other and, a tribe constitutes hardly one little village in our country. Here, there is no education, and without education, people do not even know one another from one mountain to another. Here, because of lack of books, the dead are a definitive loss, whereas in our country they go on guiding us thanks to their

writings and making us benefit from the experience and knowledge they managed to acquire...

- We, too, have our own books and scholars and still, we have not achieved anything that could contribute to our greatness. So, science is not everything.

- Of course it is. The only thing is that your 'scholars' are so concerned only with religion and the ever after that they totally neglect the present life and its requirements. If you had accepted, just once, to seriously pay attention to what the pupils of one of your country's schools, or even the erudite of your Zawiyas had to say, you would have realized that their talk dealt exclusively with the Quran. Now, the Quran is a great book and its perfect knowledge commendable, and the observation of its wise precepts cannot but maintain the very high moral level of the Muslims who know it, and provide the faithful with the safety they seek for judgment day. However, this is all conditioned on not forgetting, as you scholars do, that without other knowledge, nothing is created on this earth. For, in order to create things, similar to the objects that move along before you now, it is not enough to revere God and overwhelm him with prayers, it is also essential that we use the faculties that he has generously endowed us with: thinking, searching and even toiling. Those beautiful farms that you see over there, the splendid plantations that surround them, and the fine cattle that you look at with envy have not attained the perfection that we can imagine by the mere effect of our holy scriptures, for we too have our books, but thanks to the studies we have undertaken on matter and our successive discoveries. You may say that you, like us, you have houses, trees and cattle. You may be right, but, just as is the case with everything else, you are quite a few centuries behind, compared to us. Your shacks in the bled are exactly the same to the ones that existed one thousand years ago and they have remained as impractical and as unhealthy as they were. Your trees grow with difficulty and when they are ready to fruit, they produce only inedible fruit. Your herds always melt under the effect of bad weather. You travel on donkey back whereas we have cars, you still use rifles as war weapons when we have machine guns which can fire 600 shots a minute and canons which carry 100 kilometers. All this has been possible because our brains are constantly working in search for the better, whereas yours... Well, my poor Lahsen, understanding what I am trying to say...

- I do understand you, more than you think, and I do sincerely pay tribute to your superiority over us in all things. For, we don't really need books to acknowledge, beginning with the war, that you do it better than us, with

methods and means we never imagined. Surely, I am ignorant of what your guns are made of, how you manage to give them their admirable precision, and how you can hit targets invisible to artillery men. Also I am dumbstruck before the amazing miracle of men mounting iron and steel who go up without any effort to reach the stars and converse with their friends on earth. And, when my coreligionists consider you as 'djenuns'⁽¹⁾ because of all this, I say, because I have learnt from you to laugh at spirits and deny their existence, that such insulting claim is nonsense, and that the truth of the matter should lie in your long meditations, in your long evenings, in your light-hearted way of jumping out of bed at dawn when our Muslims use up the first three or four hours of the day stretching and yawning on their miserable pallets or even on their comfortable couches.

I could even go further and say that I consider, and firmly state, that when our marabouts tell us that you are a cursed people, they are deceiving us. Or else, God has a strange way of cursing that I would very much like to see extended to my brothers. You must admit that this state of mind denotes the beginning of a change.

- Indeed, your new state of mind does show common sense and your trust in us. Still, you haven't seen much of our power and nothing has as yet been able to give you a right idea concerning what our task in this country should be.

- How so? Do you mean that the defeats you have inflicted on us are nothing?

- I do set great store by those defeats because you are brave and because you have valiantly fought against us. However, when you see the numerous troops we have available in the home front, not to speak of the ones we have in France, which we could have launched against Berberland, you will concur with me that we never meant to wage a real war against you. What's more, when I talk about power, I don't like you to think only of means of killing and pillaging, but of those means that should bring to the Muslims and Christians, closely united, peace and prosperity. For, we consider war as a horrible thing and we look for happiness only in work. Besides, do open your eyes wide and admire with me the first results achieved so far: our train is not here anymore, but there is a town: Settat. Look how well maintained and how beautiful it is. Yet, when we arrived, hardly twenty years ago, it was just a little village, full of ponds with foul water and where heaps of manure concealed the doors of houses, just like in your present Zawiya. But, we positioned men of value here,

(1) Spirits, devils

we entrusted them with money and instructed them to work. They set to work and soon, good and beautiful chased away evil everywhere. Drinking water, which used to be brought by uncovered seguias, now flows in pipes where it cannot be soiled. Wells, which not long ago, were dug with difficulty have now transformed into beautiful fountains that ceaselessly pour out the precious liquid and spread it all through the town. The old straw cabins, where your coreligionists used to live among rats and reptiles have now been replaced by sunny little houses which are whitened twice a year in accordance with a wise law. The old tortuous streets have been converted into fine streets, lined with stones and tarred, and experts have been entrusted with taking care of them everyday. Trees have grown everywhere, providing shade for all, while benches set here and there allow old people and exhausted walkers to stop for a rest. Schools have been established where French, Italian and Spanish kids sit side by side with Muslim children, announcing the great brotherhood of tomorrow. A baker, a blacksmith, a farrier, a restaurant owner, a drink seller and doctors are all here, ready to provide people with their needs. A covered market has been set up where transactions are carried out freely under cover. A post and telephone office link the world to this formerly isolated country. Policemen and judges are here to insure the safety of people and their property. In a word, everything has been prepared for and organized. Even a speed limit has been set for cars as they drive through the town in order to prevent accidents. There are also regulations concerning one-way streets and parking places for buses. Small cabins have been installed where people can hide and squat to satisfy their natural needs.

- Do you mean that even this has been regulated?

- This, in particular, for people's health depends on it.

- But, who is it who takes so much care of the interests of the population?

- One man: the 'controller', or as the Arabs call him, the 'muraqib', who himself acts according to instructions from the Resident General.

- Is this controller Captain? Major?

- Of course not. He is a civilian chief.

...

- Obviously you seem to think that in order to command, it is necessary to wear stripes like mine. This is because you have never left the war zone. You see, we have military chiefs to pacify the country and civilian chiefs to govern

it when the war is over. As a matter of fact, these civilians themselves wear very beautifully decorated uniforms...

- Does that mean that the Zayan region will one day be commanded by civilians?

- Most certainly yes, just like this region and all the other regions...

- Well then, I think this is extraordinary; because after all, if we work with all our hearts with our military chiefs, it's because we have been able to mutually appreciate each other, arms in hand, and also because they made promises to us on the day we laid down arms. What I really like today is what the two of us share in terms of memories which help to get us closer and which unite us. I am reassured that whenever your suspicion is aroused, I can now, in one word, with a simple name or date remind you of one of my entitlements to your trust. Yet, the whole of my past will disappear on the day you leave us and, when my name is mentioned before the 'muraqib' you are talking about, it will not mean to him more than the name of any doughnut stand man.

- You are totally wrong there, for your best guarantee and that of your comrades does not lie in the memory I have of your war deeds, it rather lies in the care I take in recording them daily in a record book which is due to last much more than all of us, and which my successors will not fail to consult. This is exactly one of our organizations and one of the beneficial effects of the solidarity such organization imposes on us. We never work for our own benefit, or for the present moment; we work so that services go on functioning non stop, even after we are gone. Thus, what someone who arrives first in a region happens to learn on its people and its resources must obligatorily be transmitted in writing to his successor in order for the latter not to waste time in research which has already been carried out. This is the reason why you see me, every evening at Tourgilal, taking my pen and writing for a long time before going to sleep. So, don't you worry: whether I die tonight or whether I am transferred, my substitute, whoever that may be, will have only to sit at my work desk and he will be as informed as I am about everything. And, by the way, I must tell you that the first page of your personal record contains a detailed report on a little incident that happened a few years ago in the Zawiya suq and where there was talk about a hanged man and a kid...

- No, stop there. If you have to note such trivia in your book, you'd better leave me sink into oblivion.

- I have to note down everything, to be faithful and truthful. In any way, now that you are a Shawush, you have nothing to fear at the arrival of other chiefs in Khenifra and Turgilal. As to the civil controllers, who are still very far from Bu Hayati, I am sure that the Zayan will demonstrate the same devotion to them as they did to us, for these controllers have been selected among the best of my countrymen at all levels and that they have been made well aware of matters in Morocco. No one knows better than them how to inspire trust and deserve the respect of the populations they have been entrusted with.

- That's right, but still, there is something strange... I still find it difficult to understand how officers who have fought against us and managed to subdue us could give up their command posts to newcomers instead of remaining where they are. It's all the more surprising, as I am convinced, that we always understand each other better as soldiers...

- How can you be so affirmative when you don't even know what a civil controller looks like? Still, it seems to me that we are going astray and that we need to remember where we are. We are now in Berreshid, another town which has been built on a planning model that is different from the one used for Settat, but which is at least as attractive and stylish. Besides, it has the same organization and the same excellent results. In addition, a big establishment has been set up here for the treatment of mental diseases, crazy people...

- Well, in that case, let's drop Mustapha immediately, he hasn't said anything since Ben Ahmed and he must be thinking about his wife, or about Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi...

- Mustapha:

How could I say a word with someone as talkative as you?

Lahsen:

- You can always try, do shut me up and show how happy you are... Aren't you moved by all these fine things? As to me, I am sorry that the bus is moving so fast. Still, I am in a hurry to get to Casablanca, to that famous sea...

Mustapha:

- That won't make you any different, you'll still always be Lahsen... Indeed, Mustapha was not very talkative and turned out to be a rather gloomy road companion. Lahsen tried his best to tease him but he remained sulky. Everything he saw left him indifferent. The pylons of the wireless telephone

station of Medyuna had made him raise his head, but the officer's explanations about aerial communications had not found any echo on his part. One would say that he harbored a grudge against the Europeans who had made fortunes spout out from the surrounding land and have set up themselves as commanding masters of the elements. Unless, Captain Alain worried, he was already pondering with apprehension over the imminent disruptions looming on his own region. But then, he should say so, he should show his concern and ask; then he would be reassured. Quite the contrary, yesterday's dissident remained quiet. He withdrew into himself and, as though he feared that his thoughts would be surprised, he wrapped his head in his undone rezza, on the pretext that the air was getting cooler with the sunset. Then, having thus isolated himself and shirked from the questions he was about to be asked, he resumed his thinking about everything he had seen and heard. Was he moved? Most certainly, as much as Lahsen was, for the phenomenal expansion that the country had undergone could not leave him indifferent. And, he admired the effort that had been made, especially that he did not have any idea before that day about the Christians' aptitudes in matters related to agriculture. However, contrary to his countryman who was sincere and loyal to the extreme, what preoccupied him most was to know what had happened to the Muslims who up to then had lived on this land that was now deserted. For, this was a fact, and no matter how wide he had opened his eyes, he had not seen one duwar since the bus had started its drive on the plain. What was even worse was that the only Arabs he had seen from the cage where the passengers were trapped were men in rags pushing loaded donkeys, and workers wearing semi-Arab and semi-Christian clothes who were busy breaking stones on both sides of the road, or harvesters guarded by tadjers⁽¹⁾ on horseback. And, all the houses belonged to the Christians. Then, the former dissident started wondering whether the plains of his country would not in turn be invaded, a thought which really worried him. Fortunately, a number of duwars soon appeared in the horizon and after them, the big city with its swarming population, made up mainly of Muslims. And, as the Berber man is always consistent, Mustapha became tired of thinking and admitted to himself that nothing could happen that was not Mektoub⁽²⁾; then he finally moved toward his companions.

(1) Name given to the French settlers and to the European businessmen. Literally tradesmen

(2) Written

Besides, the hectic life of the famous Dar El Beida was soon going to catch hold of him and end up uncreasing him. He would be even so fascinated at the wonderful shops and all the beautiful things of the city that it was with regret that he returned to the mountain. And, when they were back in the Turgilal, our two Berbers were assailed with questions, with the Buhaddiwi himself being the one who made the most enthusiastic reports about their trip.



Part Three

Chapter XVII : In the Name of Independence?

The sun was setting and its rays only weakly tinged the slopes with gold. This was a most enchanting of spring Dir evenings, where blue, pink and mauve succeeded one another in the horizon, sending eyes into rapture.

This was the soft and exquisite hour when the majesty of things and the ambient peace incite humans to kindness, generosity and brotherhood.

Finally, this was the solemn hour when the Berber, sitting at the door of his tent would contemplate with love God's grandiose creation and show his gratitude to the Almighty for the joy and happiness he gave him, and would lift his soul and beg his forgiveness.

However, for the poor dissident, wondering among foreign mountains and reduced to treading upon his native soil only at night, like a criminal, this hour of serene bliss brought only sadness and torment. One does not feel joy and the heart bleeds, when one has to beg, everyday, a corner of forest to set camp. One cannot love life when continuous humiliations are the price to pay for it, when you owe it to the generosity of others.

Still, that evening, Hamu U Melluk and his people who had been refugees for two years, staying with their neighbors the Ait Bu Melal, seemed to have forgotten their deep sorrow.

They were sitting in a circle at the edge of the cliff protecting their duwar, gazing upon the Wawumana plain –their homeland- without feeling sad in any way, as though it had suddenly become of little concern to them.

Even the women and the children who were busy receiving the herds that had just returned from the pastures had not come, as they usually did, to greet their qsurs with a glance full of love before they left them for the night.

However, never had there been more concern with the beloved little motherland than that day. But talk about it was in a low voice, in private and only after having made sure that the nearby bush did not hide a prying ear. And, what was confided had a sweet taste of honey and sugar: Breaking camp is tonight or tomorrow; with God's will, we will take our morning meal in our houses at Wawumana, next to our ancestor's graves.

Besides, everything was ready and all the precious objects which could be removed from the tents without attracting the foreign visitors' attention had been taken discretely to various hiding places at the bottom of the slopes where they would be recovered on the way that night.

Oxen and cows of value had been led on purpose to pastures nearest to the zone under French control where the shepherds, pretending to be asleep, would wait for the movement to be initiated before joining the families.

Some time before, a whole herd of sheep had crossed the river, led by a bold brother who had willingly simulated a theft and flight toward the Christians, under firing from the mountain.

On the other hand, Captain Alain, who had been informed the night before by Taybi, the informer, was supposed to send rifles and cartridges and get his formidable cavalry ready to receive and assist the duwar in case of need, at a signal agreed upon with Hamu U Melluk.

Therefore, everything had been perfectly arranged and all that was needed then was to stick to the same caution observed so far for success to be complete. They might have to leave some dogs and tents behind to put the neighboring duwars off scent, but the resulting loss was nothing compared to the joy of being back home.

While waiting for the time they had been for so long looking forward to, let the young entertain themselves, let people organize an ahidus to sing, for the attention of the spies of the tribe Djema'a, the merits of outright resistance and hatred toward the French. For the news of Hamu U Melluk's visit to the Zawiya bureau had spread throughout the mountain, nobody knew how.

And, as soon as the news had reached the dissidents, Hamu u Melluk's duwar had been under strict surveillance, which meant putting to death all its members and ransacking all the tents at the first indicator of defection.

Then, slowly, the evening had sat in, as though reluctantly, bringing its collusion to the great drama that was about to take place.

One by one, the ravines had filled with shadows while the tops of the oak and carob trees were gradually being deprived of the sun rays which clung to them.

The birds had gone back to their unfinished nests and started setting again among the tangled lops and boughs. Their chirping filled the air above the rocks and fig trees first, then it reached other places that it had at last occupied, before imperceptibly dying out.

Now, it was the owl's turn to take possession of space whereas the wildcats and reptiles stealthily slipped through the thorny thickets, searching for a shelter or spring.

At the same time, on the track to Turgilal by the post neighboring Wawumana, which was lined with fennel and asphodels, there was a new warring ride.

Like huge phantoms, Captain Alain's mokhaznis, who had been strengthened by a few horsemen from Khenifra, stood out in groups on the hilltops, riding to a new feat.

Although it was meant only to facilitate the disengagement of five or six families, the operation could involve a few risks, which was enough to make it appealing.

Should a child have been responsible for some foolhardiness, or should the unsubdued have managed to discover about the project, that would have meant a fight, with all its risks, but also the possibility of victory and booty.

Therefore, there was a general atmosphere of liveliness, and, had instructions not been given for silence, the warriors would have embarked on this adventure of a new kind with singing.

What did it matter anyway? They would make up for all that by indulging in permitted pleasures and, since instructions were for complete silence, let that be a profitable way to try and catch unawares the prowlers who constituted ideal game for these head-hunters. Or else, they would try to catch a few families of hedgehogs which had ventured outside the high grass.

Then, the squadron spread all through the bled, going deep into the ravines and disappearing among the junipers and jujube trees which were so rich of hopes of all sorts.

As to Captain Alain, he was no less happy at the turn things were taking. Doubtless, he thought, it would have been better, for various reasons, if El Hadj had made the first step and preceded Hamu U Melluk in opting for submission. However, from the way things looked, the political success that had been achieved would not have less impact among the unsubdued and seemed to constitute a most interesting prelude to operations in the mountain. For, Hamu U Melluk was of an age of reason whose attitude could well determine that of all fractions neighboring his own, and perhaps even precipitate decisions made in El Hadj's own entourage. In any way, the officer who, upon returning from

his trip had released all Ishqern prisoners regardless of others' opinions in this matter, had given rather optimistic news about the political situation. He was sincerely grateful to Hamu for confirming his own views regarding the man's eagerness to honor his commitments. Therefore, it was with real pleasure that he was now going to send him, care of Taybi, the four chassepots and 1000 cartridges he needed, and it was with wholehearted delight that he was going to meet him, having informed his chiefs about the matter.

However, Shawush Lahsen was following, without real enthusiasm, at the end of the Captain's personal escort, as though he had a premonition of sad events ahead.

Having crossed the Muha U 'Ali and Buhara streams and having paid a visit to the tomb of Sidi Taybi and to the Labarat pass, without incident, except for the sad capture of a hare which had bumped into the feet of the horses, the detachment reached the Wawumana construction and took dispositions towards achieving its mission.

In the first place, Taybi and a relative of Hamu U Melluk, who had acted as a hostage and who had been generously sent back by the Captain to help with transport of weapons, were dispatched to Tighbula.

Having left the post at 22 hours, they would, if they walked fast reach their friends by midnight, as agreed.

Then, Captain Alain, the officer in command of the post and the lance-sergeant in charge of the artillery position proceeded to read on the map the itinerary which Hamu U Melluk and his people had to follow, as well as the positions the mokhaznis had to successively reach in case they were called upon to assist the newly rallied group.

As the area where the operation was to take place at daybreak was entirely within sight of the post observers, potential resort to the canon and machine guns would most certainly be easy. Still, and in order to avoid errors, each mokhazni group leader was provided with a large white panel with black crossbars which he had to display opposite the post at each of his stops.

Moreover, it was agreed that the first canon shot would be only upon express order from the Captain, to be signaled using a rocket sent up from the post, and that the garrison was not to interfere in any way except through firing shots from inside the post building.

Finally, the signal agreed with Hamu U Melluk for his call for assistance having been disclosed to three groups of lookouts, the Captain joined his horsemen outside the walls and, having wrapped himself in his burnous, he went to sleep while waiting for action, fully satisfied that he had done his duty.

It was now 11 o'clock.

A thin moon crescent appeared in the horizon, towards El Qebab and Kerushen, and the area was overrun by a pallid light. The moon was red, a sign of wind and a bad one.

Yet, the ahydus of Tighbula was going full swing, and the circle of dancers had been reinforced with the neighboring youth, called by the sound of tambourines.

Two clans of dancers had been formed each containing two or four improvisers (*ineshadhen*) leading the challenge of eloquence.

They took turns to speak, using varied tunes, and reviewing all the recent events. One of them praised the deeds of a prowler in subdued land, and another regaled the audience with the exploits of a hunter, while a third exercised his wit, in discrete and selected words, on the scandalous loves of a lady with *beautiful and lying eyes*.

Then, when the canon started thundering towards Dshar El Oued, the favourite theme was enthusiastically taken up and the patriotism of Imazighen, those *lions among the lions*, was exalted on all tones, whereas the impure and cursed Christian was doomed to the worst calamities.

Now, after having launched their verbal attack on the mokhaznis of the rumi, on his Qaids and his shiouxh who had sold their honor and their country for a piece of *kumir*⁽¹⁾, the singers moved to a game of sung riddles (*tikefrines*) and quickly, they set about those who were suspected of having decided to side with the enemy:

*I would like O trouvere dear, to know
Through your 'allun'⁽²⁾ with the moving tunes
The name of the one who is put off by lamb
And who is after the foul 'black'
Refrain
O! cousin, take me to the cool shade
And prepare my noble couch*

(1) Pejorative noun for bread made by Europeans

(2) Tambourine

The perfidious allusion was initiated by a group from Ait Tanammast, known for their enmity towards Hamu U Melluk's village. Their singer was actually jousting with one from the duwar concerned. The allusion was obvious, the lamb being the dissidents' favorite meal and the black referring to pork, which was so dear to the Christians.

Failing to take up the joust amounted either to cowardice, or in the present circumstances to an out of the common strength of soul.

However, the *trouve* from Ait Hamu hesitated and, in his perplexity, he repeated the insult that was directed to his group.

But, proceeding in such a way any longer meant giving up and yielding to the opponent and therefore, accepting defeat. It implied letting doubt hover over his own people, which meant bringing shame on them, a hideous and ultimate shame in the presence of women...

Responding with anything or trying to engage the audience on another topic would not be accepted as it would mean breaking the rules of the game. In any way, such a tactic would be useless as, once again, the intention to provoke an incident was obvious. And, to achieve that end, all that was needed was to ask the question in another way.

Another solution was to gallantly defend the candidates to submission, using an ironical tone, feigning indifference. Alas! The duwar chief's visit to the Bureau was now public knowledge, nobody would be fooled by the irony and, as the response would be taken seriously, the storm they were trying to avoid would rage anyway.

That was a distressing dilemma which involved so many feelings and whose end could only be disastrous since capitulation could not help avoid a scandal, a scuffle and perhaps a fight, just a few moments away from the return to the homeland, from deliverance.

The old men of the duwar, too, were exalted. They had heard, from afar, the fatal improvisation and immediately understood. Being aware of the touchiness and courage of their brothers, and fearing a too violent riposte, which in other circumstances they would not discourage, they stood and anxiously moved toward the group, where the Ait Tanammast were still enjoying their triumph, in order to put an end to the fatal stage of the challenge, if it was not too late.

However, at that very moment, the merciless victors, using their right, stopped the two ranks of singers at a signal. They thus definitively marked

their opponents' failing, before moving to another couplet which implied another question and provided more precision:

*What say you O Ait Hamu my brothers
Of the fish which lives, free in the water
And which merrily goes to the hook
And to its death
REFRAIN
O cousin, take me to the cool shade
And prepare my noble couch*

From that moment on, the situation was clear, even for those who refused to understand, and everybody started wondering what the remaining part of the night would be like. Tambourines, which were incessantly being warmed over the embers nearby so that they would resound better, swirled around heads, under the joyful or enraged strikes. The women and young girls huddled further against the dancers as though they had a premonition of the tragedy that was preparing. They were intent on reminding the crowd of their presence and that they had the right to victory. Already, their glances, which a short while before were languid and promising, were now blazing with anger at the enemy, and their gestures that accompanied the songs now completely disregarded the rhythm of music and had become totally disorganized.

Outside the circle, the old experienced women were gathering the children for whom it was time to go bed, and trembling, they prepared to flee.

As to the young men from Ait Hamu, they went on singing as though nothing could move them. They went on repeating the end of the cursed couplet, but also counting how many of them there were, checking their number and confiding their anguish to each other, while the amghar and the men of his age were quietly proceeding to undo the ties in the cattle pens, already awaiting their terrible fate...

Then, without further ado, the calamity that threatened the duwar ruthlessly struck. There was a shout, one shout that resounded at two hundred meters from the tents, a long shout that sounded like a call, a sinister one similar to a groaning: abu...h! And, immediately, a heavy fusillade crackled that was echoed back by the rocks of Kheddi, blindly spreading death. Men fell to the ground with the love refrain still on their lips, children were doubled up with

pain in their mother's arms and blood squirted, reddening the women's scarves. Then, a terrible hand-in-hand was engaged in semi-darkness...

There was shouting from all directions and moaning in all corners... Then, slowly came death, with the dying not realizing why and wondering what God, the Mighty and Merciful, was doing...

In the mean time, voices could be identified in the carnage, and it became possible to recognize the assailants. It was the Ait Bu Mellal, the very hosts of the victims, assisted by the *Derqawa*⁽¹⁾ with the green turbans of Sidi Abdelmalek Ben Taybi.

Then, with their strength now tenfold increased at the outrageous violation of hospitality, the survivors among Ait Hamu stood up and pounced on the enemy. Because Taybi had not yet arrived, there were not enough rifles, but what did it matter? The daggers would do, and the traitors and their Saharan allies would see what the Ait Umalu were capable of. They shall be hacked about one by one, and their arms and legs shall be cut. Their eyes shall be gouged out and victory shall go to those who have endured so much for independence and who were being destroyed in the name of that same independence. There were many dead and wounded, the cattle had been taken away and destruction was now total. But, even if it meant having to stand one against a hundred, even if they would have to feed only on grass, the motherland would still be beautiful and life full of honor. But, they had to reach victory, to save the children, to join the Christian who must have been alerted by the fire signals some time before.

Alas! Help failed to come, for the man who was supposed to get help had fallen among the first victims and Wawumana was far away... Besides, Hamu U Melluk had been captured and was now being dragged to the Suq of Ait Bu Melal by enemy horsemen.

Then, despairing of their situation as there were only four of them still standing, the Ait Hamu gave away and, beside themselves with pain, they fled through the woods following their families.

At day break, the French cavalry initially surprised by the absolute silence in the mountain and thinking they had been betrayed received a dozen sobbing persons. In the meantime, in the distance on the heights of Turgilal, two hundred warriors escorted Hamu U Melluk and, chanting litanies, prepared their prisoner's torture, under our vain heavy gunfire.

(1) Followers of a religious sect bearing the same name

Chapter XVIII : Great Hours

The news of the imminent arrival of the French column in the mountain had been brought that night by an informer, and had instantly spread from Anuggal to Kerushen. Such news had spread terror, like a fearsome thunderbolt, and the inexpressible anguish of great days could be read on all the faces.

However, there was no panic and a resolution had been made to fight to the death. But, people thought about the crops in the plain and they shivered at the thought that they would be destroyed. They also thought about the El Qebab alliance that had been broken as soon as it had been concluded. They reflected on the suspected unhealthy ambitions as well as on the ambiguous attitude of some of the notables.

They anxiously wondered whether the mountain would show that it was worthy of its past, whether their hatred for the invaders would prevail over their internal disagreements and rivalries.

However, the rivalries among the notables of different groups were so stubborn that nobody was willing to make the first move towards achieving the so-needed understanding.

Endless talk went on in every tribe, but outside this setting, even the most worried among them affected a complete indifference. The situation was still too close and reminiscent of the affronts of Tighessalin, the outrage of Tinteghallin and the razzia of Beni Khelil where quite a few lost their lives because of lack of help. Nobody could forget wounds made to self-esteem, the most hurting of all.

Therefore, they already dreaded the Christian's victory, which only a miracle could prevent, and they prepared to die decently so as to deserve respect from history, that is from *ineshadhen*⁽¹⁾, those formidable makers of public opinion. However, as they felt they had to deceive the enemy who had always demonstrated a morbid need to know, a horde of perfectly trained old men and women everyday invaded the bordering posts to spread false rumors, to announce gatherings, and to intimidate.

(1) Bards

At the same time, there was unusual activity at the Turgilal. More and more convoys arrived, accumulating provisions of all kinds, ammunition, equipment and everything essential for setting up health centers for the natives in the future mountain works. Every morning, a detachment of mounted goumiers would ride to Aqissari to secure passage along the motor track, up to sunset. The Supply Corps carried out purchases of cattle. The Greek monopolized eggs and chickens. Profiteers of all nationalities congregated to the post to get ready to join the column with their boxes of canned goods, their bags of sugar and their cotton cloth, which will allow the immediate opening of new display markets.

As to the Captain, whose trust in the ongoing operations was growing everyday, he applied himself mainly to the task of maintaining his ally El Hadj in a favorable disposition towards him. However, as Sidi Abdelmalek Ben Taybi had managed to arrange the massacre of Hamu U Melluk's duwar a few days before, the officer had intensified his intelligence service on the man's residence, as well as on Tihuna where his brothers Sidi Muhammed and Sidi El Mekki had settled. Every hour, and thanks to his emissaries whose services were generously remunerated, he knew what both his friends and foes were doing. Every evening, he gave his higher command his own interpretation of all the information he had received by telegraph.

The little red flags indicating the successive locations of groups of opponents moved frantically on the staff headquarters map, due to the extreme mobility of the groups, and even more to the absence of any defensive tactics.

They were now hardly a few days away from the column's arrival to Turgilal. The troops which had exerted a tremendous effort in Ait Wirra territory were now camping at Zawiya Esh Sheikh and preparing to slide along the mountain towards Ishqern land. Their chief, a man of action, was Colonel Freydenberg, which said it all. He had already drawn up a plan for the new campaign and resolutely decided to immediately attack the most hostile tribe: the Ait Y'aqub U 'Ayssa, with the aim of shortening the duration of the campaign and reducing the loss in men.

There would obviously be a revenge to take for the Tighbula massacre on the way through Anuggal, but that kind of sentimentality which would produce no practical result was dismissed from the outset. Besides, the Derqawa of Sidi Abdelmalek who had been recognized as the real responsible for the aggression on Hamu U Melluk had already abandoned their encampment and retreated far towards the South. The Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa, on the other hand, and their eyries of Tinteghallin constituted most appropriate targets for the column.

From the point of view of tactics, the area which was preceded by a vast plain propitious for preparatory deployments, allowed for all kinds of daring actions. Once the plain had been crossed, they would have, of course, to climb up a number of steep slopes above which the village had been built, but there were plenty of courses and the assault could be safely launched under the protection of the artillery.

From a political point of view, the choice of the boisterous tribe for opening the campaign imposed itself with even more strength. This group was considered by its neighbors as the most powerful in the Dir, particularly after its fortunate resistance to Muha U Hamu's attempts. It had indeed recently incurred a complete razzia, its Djema'a had certainly gone for talks at the Turgilal post and had obtained the release of its prisoners, but the group hated the foreigner and had so much trust in the value of its warriors that in spite of the interest it had just been given, it would most certainly prove to be the soul of the resistance. By this very fact, nothing could better serve the subsequent development of operations than a resounding occupation by our troops of Tintegallin, the capital of Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa.

Moreover, it was on their territory that the most illustrious members of the *Imhiwash*⁽¹⁾ family had been buried, and, according to a legend that enjoys a lot of credence among the most loyalist in Zayan land, the hospitality given to the remains of those revered marabouts provides the tribe with protection against any violation of its territory. Thus, if ever the territory happened to be invaded, a horseman dressed in white and riding a light green horse would suddenly come out of one of the graves and, rushing at the assailants with a flag in his hand, he would achieve their immediate and complete destruction. Therefore, it was most important to immediately prove to the partisan Zayan, who would have to fight with the front guard, that nothing of the sort could stop a French column.

Finally, setting about the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa was a way of providing satisfaction to El Hadj 'Ali who did not stop exhorting the Captain to act in that way. He had promised that, if what he proposed was adopted, all the Ait Ishaq would be brought into our lines as soon as the Tasfilalet position, situated South of Tinteghallin, would have been equipped with a post with canons.

While the magnificent chief was in the process of preparing one of his most striking victories, and God knows that he knew how to achieve outstanding

(1) Descendants of Sidi Boubker and of Sidi 'Ali Amhawesh

ones, in the tough Berber mountain extending from Wawizeght to the Marmusha, and everywhere a chief of caliber was needed, the situation in the dissidence region had seriously changed.

Under the effect of the information gathered by the informers of Djema'as concerning the troops that had started marching on their land, and the seriousness of the danger that was looming, the notables had at last decided to consider the possibility of a defensive alliance of all the Dir tribes. Initially, the alliance had faced serious difficulties, resulting from the fact that each one of the people concerned had asked that the coalition contingents should first gather in his own area, but eventually, they resorted to the arbitration of Agurram Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi and soon, an agreement was reached. Now, upon the Agurram's advice, it was decided that Ait Ishaq warriors would gather at Butasefsaft in order to watch the column during its march from Wawumana to Zawiya, whereas the Ishqern would get together at Tinetghallin to prevent access to the village, and if need be, access to El Qebab, the capital of Imzinaten.

While waiting for the moment to act, the tribes would apply themselves to block the ways leading to their land, using stone-blocks to be removed from the rock pathways. They would also search for all the spies who infested the area to serve the Christians, in order to kill them.

Actually, there was more and more talk about the dishonest compromise of El Hadj 'Ali who was said to have promised his tribe's submission to the Captain of the Turgilal. There was also talk about the more and more strange attitude of the former unsubdued 'Ali U Husa, who had abused the hospitality granted to him and was striving in a thousand ways to induce discouragement both in his surroundings and in the suqs. And if, for lack of evidence, nothing could be done for the moment against the former whose clan was powerful indeed, the latter's intrigues could not be tolerated anymore and he could be sacrificed to set an example, without unpleasant consequences.

The crime was immediately perpetrated by a number of volunteers from Ait Bu Haddu, who were glad enough to give Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi evidence of their submission, and perhaps also to satisfy a desire for personal revenge.

One morning, 'Ali U Husa was going to the Ait Ishaq suq when he was joined on his way by two young men of his age who seemed quite happy to make the trip in his company. The two men and 'Ali U Husa fell over each

other with politeness, and none of them would go first in the narrow pathway where they had to follow one another. Eventually, although with regret because they were in a country where one dreads even his own shadow, 'Ali U Husa went first. A few minutes later, as they were about to reach a beautiful spring where they could quench their thirst, a long dagger cut through him from end to end and he lay stone dead at the feet of his assassins.

That very evening, the news was hawked from one duwar to another among the dissidents, spreading joy and enthusiasm everywhere, while Captain Alain had to sadly add yet another name to the already long list of obscure creditors of civilization.

The grass of Tighessalin plain teemed with life that morning, as though a multitude of reptiles had been released there. Hundreds of lines of soldiers and partisans crossed in all directions, long, swift, and multicolored, looking for their starting positions. On the Djebel Buyghssayn, that stronghold of Ishqern land from which the whole universe could be sighted, thousands of white burnouses bustled about in the morning breeze; then, like turbans, they crowned the rocks. This was the great day that both the French and the Berbers had been waiting for so long, the former hoping that it would be peaceful, and the latter, asking for la'fu, deliverance from the foreign yoke that threatened them.

Already, no asphodel was standing and, under the steps of men and horses, flowerets and high ears had to bow their heads, having been overcome before their masters. Yet, the colonel had given orders for the crops to be spared, but how could such damage be avoided when an army of 3,000 men and 1500 horses moved under insults? And, from on high, insults showered, while waiting for the fusillade...

The column had formed in perfect order, facing its target. The partisans and the makhzen were standing against the mountain, with the regular vanguard following close behind them. However, in accordance with orders, they had not yet fired a shot and, like Homer's heroes, they merely responded to provocations with provocations.

To the right and to the left, legionnaires and infantry men formed flank-guards and, just as they were used to, they had already started glancing for the slopes they would have to climb up, for the pathways that would lead them to victory.

At the center, the artillery was putting guns in battery under the supervision of its impassive commander, Colonel Ducla. In the meantime, Colonel Freydenberg, the chief whose commanding post was set against Sidi Bu

‘Anan’s sanctuary, was training his binoculars for the last time on each of his groups. Then, with a short bugle call, he gave the attack signal.

Immediately; the abuse stopped on both sides, and the gunfire started on all the unsubdued front. The canon grumbled, covering the mountain crests with the smoke of its shells, thus obliging their defenders to retreat from them. But, the position was disproportionately long and, despite the accuracy of the firing, the Berbers left their untenable fighting positions only to occupy others nearby. And, as the column partisans had already started suffering losses and showing some hesitation, and as a white horseman had appeared by the Imhiwash cemetery, causing panic among a Zayan group, a huge clamor resounded on the side of the mountain men, who stopped firing, anxiously waiting for the miracle to take place.

However, the horseman had hardly come out of the cemetery when a machine gun spray obliged him to turn back at full gallop. He dropped his flag which got lost among the graves and his white burnous entangled in the thorny aloe. He hesitated, and whirled, trying to make himself as inconspicuous as possible under the bullets which were harassing him; then he disappeared behind a green-tiled qubba. So, Bu’azza’s makhzen and the 1st Mixed Goum charged with drawn swords and the troops climbed up the ridges with fixed bayonets and, in less time than the unsubdued took to get over their deception, the village was surrounded, occupied and passed.

Seeing that their houses had been desecrated and realizing that the predictions that had been feeding their hopes had once again been disappointed, the unsubdued could no more hold back their anger. But, instead of facing facts and giving in, their contingents quickly formed up again behind the ridges and reappeared among the green oaks, more numerous and more determined. Just as happened earlier, but more closely now, the two parties steadily heaped insults upon each other. They were hardly one hundred meters apart, flattened behind rocks or standing against the biggest trees: Zayan, Ishqern, mokhaznis and goumiers, who knew each other for having often confronted each other, they drew on their memories of past battles insults of all kinds. Then, having displayed the worst defects of each other, they started man-to-man and tribe-to-tribe challenges. And, in order for the trouvere to have only praises to sing the next day, they stood as targets to the sniper on the other side. As soon as they realized that the bullet had missed its target, they sniggered and called for their turn, begging the canon and the mortar nearby to abstain from firing.

However, the column chief decided to put an end to the fight and the troops were eager to camp out. Already, orders prescribing disengagement were circulating. Then, a few volleys were exchanged and rendez-vous for future battles were shouted. While the Christian was setting up a huge camp on conquered territory, the Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa and Imzinen had disappeared in the woods.

The Ait Ishaq, on their part, were still deliberating beyond the Aqqa U Slem, while Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi, the former strategist, was telling his beads, far from the shots.

The French, having achieved victory in every engagement, their tricolor was now flying over quite a number of positions. All the Ishqern peaks had been successively occupied and immediately connected with newly built tracks.

Then, the flow of the springs was calculated and plans were drawn up. Now, around each site that had been selected for erecting a fortification, a frantic activity was devoted to building shades for the winter.

For this was an area of high altitude, and within less than two months, the rain, and then the snow, will make it impossible to work outside. Therefore, every officer had turned into an architect or an engineer, and all soldiers had laid down arms, although always within easy reach, in order to get hold of a trowel, a plane or a water level. And, owing to everyone's zeal, each working day helped to finish a new wall element which was immediately covered with whitewash to show the unsubdued observers that the French were there to stay.

It was then that the Ichqern, giving up hope that the troops would ever leave, started seriously thinking about the situation. It was then that the time to make great decisions came, the time when they had to opt for one of two most painful alternatives, either submission or exile.

Therefore, as soon as defeat was deemed irreversible, the matter was discussed at length within every family, and under all tents that had been hastily moved far away towards Tifert, Mulay Ya'qub and Tnarten.

Obviously, they initially did not consider the possibility of joining the Christians, who would have dared mention such an appalling suggestion when mourning the dead was still going on. But, it was so good to think about and reiterate the numerous reasons for keeping fighting and fleeing further even if necessary.

They, then, started thinking about the qsurs they had to abandon and the crops which would be seized by the Zayan column. However, they found consolation in thinking about a miracle happening the next day which would bring the Berbers home, without having to suffer humiliation.

They also talked about the cruel losses they had incurred and indulged in shedding a few tears, for the Amazigh are emotional, but they quickly managed to pull themselves together. They were convinced that men can be replaced fairly easily and that warriors are made *only for the purpose of defending their motherland when it is attacked*, and therefore, that those among their tribesmen who had fallen in the last battles had only performed their duty. Besides, how could a Berber be concerned with the number of dead when freedom was threatened? One has to learn how to suffer when it is suffering time and how to be great in times of adversity ...

However, French occupation was extending more and more southward, and the planes relentlessly harassed the tribes which refused to give up the fight.

As soon as the sun was up, the cursed birds invaded the sky, like gigantic storks and, when they were over the forest, they dropped their deadly bombs. The canons also joined in, with their rumblings being heard from all directions, and spreading terror among the humans.

There were few or no victims at all, as though the Christian intended only to intimidate, but under the permanent threat of death, existence itself was no more than an endless ordeal.

The children, in particular, were scared, and words to comfort them run out quickly. Indeed, they were taken every morning to the deep and dark caves among the scorpions and green lizards, but these shades themselves were not enough to reassure them. From time to time, a hellish whistling thing could be heard, groaning and rumbling over the mountain oueds and then, as though guided by God's hand, it landed right into the ground by the ultimate hiding refuges. Then, with a frightening roar, they turned the earth upside down, smashing the rocks, reducing the trees to bits and causing even further shaking.

Then, the men became more withdrawn and more gloomy. Their reasoning ability started swaying, their arrogance waned and their trust in their leaders disappeared. They forgot Islam for the sake of which the illustrious igurramen had not been able to sacrifice their lives. They had not even exposed themselves at the head of the faithful and were concerned only about their own children who could, any moment, be torn to bits. But, where could they go?

Exile would be fatal, it had ruined and enslaved the Zayan who had resigned themselves to it during the occupation of Khenifra a few years before. Submission to the Christian would bring shame upon them and implied a lot of risks, for the victor would most certainly take revenge for his dead, should there be any.

However, they had to make a decision and opt for leaving this area which had become inhospitable. Moreover, as Captain Alain's emissaries tirelessly spoke about peace and brotherhood, about kindness and forgiveness, there was also talk about a new master of the hour who had appeared near Aghbala in the free area. Therefore, the scission materialized and the crisis was resolved. One evening, as the sun had ceased to light the world, one hundred Ait Ben Messa'ud families quietly moved away and joined the nearest post. Meanwhile, the rest of the confederation, still thirsty for adventure, hastily gathered their rags and fled towards new horizons in picturesque convoys...

Still, what was it that caused new agitation that evening in dissidence land, although the people had reached safety? From Djebel Tifert to Buwattas, where the fleeing duwars had now settled, warning fires had been lit on all the hills, which unknown hands had kept burning without flagging. In each encampment and in the Aghbala village which had become a symbol of hope for Islam, horses were being hastily saddled and, with eyes fascinated by the double blaze of Bu Ushen that indicated the rallying point to the horsemen who flew there. Was it a new French advance, executed under cover of darkness? Or was it an attack, decided all of a sudden by the Djema'as? Would they have to prepare to flee even further, or else to live again to new hope after a new El Herri? For, after all, the igurramen had asserted that never would the defeat of Imazighen be final, and that the moment for revenge would come when least expected, as a reward for their faith and their suffering.

But alas! There was none of that all that... On the contrary, the mountain was going through yet a new ordeal with one of its most prominent notables preparing to abandon it. It was El Hadj 'Ali who had thrown off his mask and was coolly advising his brothers to submit to the inevitable fate and lay down arms, to become Christians. Without shame, he had gone to the enemy and come back on a beautiful horse, perhaps even having pocketed the title of Qaid. As to the other notables, in spite of their promise to follow him, they now knew what real promises were implied in the present and prepared for the lucky man the same fate as Hamu U Melluk.

However, El Hadj was not going to let it happen and he had taken his own precautions. He was firmly resolved to honor his commitments towards the French at all costs, with the insured support of thirty rifles from his own fraction.

Besides, as he was fairly close to the Tasfilalet post with 1500 Zayan horsemen from the column, he had organized his own qsar of Butasefsaft for the defensive and, all of a sudden –as was usual-, he had enjoined the potentially reluctant among his groups to pronounce themselves for or against him.

Then, by way of a response, warning fires were lit at Bu Ushen and the qsar was immediately blocked, under the orders of Sidi El Mekki Ben Taybi.

Now, just as if nothing had ever united them, the Berbers started fighting against each other with unprecedented fury.

The Ishqern, reinforced by their Ait Sukhman hosts from Aghabala, had since dawn occupied the forest overlooking the qsar and the spring that supplied it with water. No living human being could cross the enclave yard without coming under fire. The besieged men, on their part, had not had time to alert the column and were fighting with strength born out of desperation. Being now certain about their fate in case of defeat, they determined to fight for life.

El Hadj, who moved from one of the crenels dug in the rammed clay to the other, was already covered with wounds, but nothing would make him give up the fight. Three of his brothers lay on the ground, fatally wounded, but to the women who mourned them, he showed four dead enemy bodies outside.

However, the assailants were making obvious progress. Favored by the nature of the terrain, they crawled to about a hundred meters from one of the sides and, now that they were under cover of the cliff, they prepared to dash towards the fortification door.

Then, to the delight of people who are about to despair, ten mokhaznis led by Shawush Lahsen appeared on one of the crests behind which they were patrolling and opened a moving fire on the warriors of Sidi El Mekki. The latter, thinking that the column had arrived, immediately fell back and started a frantic flight, without even thinking about carrying their own dead. El Hadj, who was no more than a heap of bandages, managed to gather enough strength to get on his horse and take part in the chase. The other wounded, perked up by the arrival of Captain Alain and the Zayans who had at last been alerted, painfully managed to reach the crests and participate in the firing. In the meantime, the women who always get carried away by fighting, dragged the children to the crest to witness the victory.

Eventually, calm prevailed again around the qsar that started celebrating, and, while blazes announced feasting time, three flags were quickly put together and hoisted on a pole, in honor of his Sherifian Majesty and France.

Chapter XIX : Mektoub!...⁽¹⁾

The announced *Master of the Day* had been miserably defeated and had shamefully taken flight during the night. Still, he had promised an unprecedented victory and the whole of Ait Sukhman land had trembled with hope and expectations. From Na'ur to Tounfit, successive celebrations had been held for a whole month, in honor of the messenger of God. Presents had been received from all parts, brought with great pomp by the proud Djema'as. Women had performed wonders to get close to the holy man, even to get into his bed and feel his holy caresses. Even the children had often fled from their tents and, full of adoration, had spent hours contemplating the supernatural being who had managed to stop the people's tears.

However, there was a big difference between making promises and keeping them, and the Alemsid blockhaus where the last hour of the rumi was supposed to come had held fast. Then, the rout had come with its trail of calamities and, again, tears had flown down the thin faces.

It was thus that, from time to time, the Berber people had been deluded with illusions and hopes before they sank into despondency. Then, all of a sudden, a star would rise for them, promising safety before it invariably grew dim and disappeared in the horizon, leaving them all bruised to their destiny. Somewhere, it was an amghar playing the sultan and raising a flag that his hands could not hold for long. Some other time, it was a shepherd who had just been raised to the pinnacle by some act of banditry and who, with no regard for common sense had been able to win over the crowds and to communicate to them his dangerous intoxication. Still somewhere else, it was some visionary who, in his dangerous exaltation, had managed to arouse the masses, causing their loss. Every time, what happened was the stubble fire that threatened to destroy everything in its way before it died out, powerless, at the first levee it happened to come across. Other causes that contributed to the situation were first the incompetence of the elected warlords, who obtained the people's approbation through their luck. Pusillanimity on the part of the marabouts whose line of conduct was dictated by their whim and so-called

(1) That was written

inspirations from on high was the second cause. A third cause was the inconstancies of the warriors who lost heart at the first failure and who betrayed each other. All this contributed to making of each convulsion a short-lived episode which would begin in the enthusiasm of public meetings and end in the grief of turned down hoods.⁽¹⁾

But still, in spite of the lessons of the past, the carefree Berber is unable to resist the temptation and calls of war and, however weak his trust in the efforts he has been asked to deploy, his drive to start a gunfight is stronger than reason, up to the moment when his empty pen and the moaning of his children call him back to wisdom.

Be that as it may, the problem was a complete one again for the Dir people and anxiety caught hold of their families. The guns and the aircraft had gone quiet, but their anxiety was even greater now for them to take up new causes. The three thousand fleeing tents had indeed found refuge among the Ait Sukhman, but they had been accepted there only temporarily, while waiting for deliverance. Now that any such hope had to be abandoned, they had to think up a solution: to move even further, to flee further, to flee all the time, for the country was poor, arable land was scarce and the hakem of Alemsid threatened to resume the bombardments if they did not listen to reason.

But, where could they move forward to? Already they had started shivering with cold, and the foot of the High Atlas was covered with snow. The carpets had been sold and the cattle had disappeared, taken away either by the horsemen who served the French or by disease. The rifles had gone, one after the other, parted with for nothing or exchanged for some grain. And, destitution threatened to be even greater now that the Oued El 'Abid people had refused not only to lend them ploughs and teams, but also to allow them to pickaxe among the mastic tree tufts.

Then, as always, they turned to the Djema'as asking them to act. But, what could the notables do to save their brothers? They had counted on Islamic brotherhood, but the Ait Sukhman had failed to comply with their most sacred duty towards the tribes. The religious personalities whose help and protection they had hoped for in those difficult moments had just entered into conflicts with one other, thinking only about killing each other over a petty question of women. Therefore, and in spite of their loathing for such a solution, the

(1) When the Berber is struck with some great calamity, he demonstrates his affliction by turning down the hood of his burnous over his head up to the eyes.

Djema'as could do nothing but recommend submission to the Christian. It would obviously be a great calamity for warriors who had made so many sacrifices to remain free, but nobody had the right to elude the will of God when it was so evident.

Besides, the news from the subjugated zone presented the Ait Ben Messa'ud and El Hadj 'Ali's fractions as the happiest people in the whole Dir, under the authority of the French. The poorest among their duwars had received all kinds of assistance as soon as they had arrived at the post. Finally, the rumi had shown at least as much respect as the Muslims would to all the families and to their religion. Therefore, there was no more reason to hesitate since the warriors, just like the notables, now considered that resistance was not possible any more, and that the decision had been taken to go back home that very night. As to the Ait Sukhman, they would soon be sorry for their selfishness.

Then as a soon as the night was over, an incredible news started circulating by telephone from one end of the French fronts to the other, and in all the other posts, which caused an incredible joy.

At Wawumana, as well as at the Zawiya, and at Asserdun and Tisselt, in fact everywhere in the Muluya, there was only one shout among the soldiers, and the mokhaznis were in frenzy.

Shouts of There they are! There they are! could be heard from all the lookout towers and hundreds of eyes eagerly gazed at the numerous marching columns from which there came no firing for the first time for long months

They came out from all parts of the forest, from all the ravines and from every path. They looked like an anthill that moved slowly, swelled, and expanded before it turned into a throng.

Men, women and children moved quietly, with a hypnotized gaze at the white fortress which only the day before constituted an object of universal hatred, and which now was an object of hope for everyone.

They could be seen stopping from time to time, as though, smitten by remorse, they had decided to turn back. But, having recovered their breath, they again took up their march behind the loaded animals.

The old men seemed exhausted, but, realizing that this was the last stage and the end of their suffering, they bravely followed.

Then, the horsemen came out at full gallop from all the fortifications and went straight to meet their new friends. They, too, were delighted at the sight of the returning crowds, which they considered as a reward for their own efforts.

The adversaries' submission would change their existence and deny them profitable razzias, but thanks to the hands that had come back, the country would develop and the cost of living would decrease. And then, the French officers, who had for so long been looking forward to that day, would be so glad that the event would be duly celebrated.

Obviously everybody was happy and Captain Alain, in particular, could not hide his emotion. You could see it in his eyes, and guess it in his acts.

As soon as the unsubdued had appeared, ahead of the posts of his own sector, he had informed his District Commander and initiated the measures that had been set for a long time in anticipation of that great day.

Upon his orders, and because he knew how great desolation was on the mountain, the Secondary Support Service NCO had ordered the baking of thousands of loaves of bread, the Greek's flour, sugar and tea had been requisitioned, and the goumiers' and mokhaznis' wives had been mobilized to prepare a gigantic couscous.

Also, knowing that malaria had already caused terrible losses among the returning families, he had the doors of the ambulance-infirmarium wide-open, in order not to delay any more the fight against this plague.

However, the material assistance that he was in a position to provide thanks, in particular, to the savings made on the product of razzias, were not the only ones to hold his attention.

What concerned him even more was the moral health of the newly submitted people, whom he knew had been seriously shaken, and only him, the best healer of souls, could help restore it. As a matter of fact, he thought that the Ishqern and Ait Ishaq had come back only reluctantly, having exhausted their power of resistance, and that the feeling of hatred they had always harboured against the foreigner had not relented. They would, of course, protest their good feelings towards the French, they would lay down their remaining arms or promise not to take them up again against their victor. But, they would still consider as enemies those who would necessarily have to settle all the details of their new life. In their relationships with the officers and soldiers, they would pretend to be submissive and respectful, but as soon

as they were back home in their duwars, it would most certainly with contempt that they would mention the conqueror and the rumi. Yet, nothing would be more disastrous than letting this state of mind prevail; if it did, the organization and taming work that had to be achieved would, without doubt, be jeopardized, with the most useful measures at risk of being knowingly misinterpreted in the tents. Therefore, it was also as urgent to reassure the newcomers and win their hearts as to distribute bread and medicine. It was of utmost importance to show that, far from being exposed to retaliation or to vexatious harassment now that they had joined the French lines, they would be made welcome as prodigy children, worthy of the greatest consideration and the greatest honors.

Therefore, the Captain did not hesitate to join his mokhaznis at the foot of the Djebel Bu Grir, and to lead them in receiving his administered, or as Shawush Lahsen insisted on calling them, the new imsubren.⁽¹⁾

The first men he met were precisely Ait Ishaq and Bu Haddu notables whose feats were recalled to him in a low voice by Taybi, the informer, who was serving for the last time as a guide to the dissidents.

One of them had stolen two rifles at the Zawiya post a few weeks before during a dreadful night. In order to easily cross the grid of barbed wire, he had covered it with a mat made of dwarf palm tree and dug a hole in the outer wall. Then, he had slipped through the grid like a lizard, reaching the marabout tent containing the weapons. Having pulled it off, he had indeed been followed by the sentinels' gunfire, but had been missed...

Another had taken part in the Aqissari ambush and the capture of Raho the mokhazni. He, indeed, had fought well on that day and during the battles that followed...

A third one had been among the assailants of Hamu U Melluk's duwar. The survivors had often formally mentioned his name. They even suspected him of having provoked the assassination attempt by exaggerating and distorting the information he had about the notable's relationship with the captain.

A fourth ..., but in fact all of them, without exception had been responsible for wrongdoings: killing mokhaznis, entertaining fiery rhetoric against the French, etc. There was even one whose face matched exactly the description, given by the informers, of one of 'Ali U Husa's murderers.

(1) Pejorative appellation for the submitted

Besides, it was enough for one to gaze at them to notice how uneasy they were, as though they did not have a clear conscience. Moreover, they seemed reluctant and drew aside, with their hoods covering half of their faces. The women stopped on the pretext of redoing their loads, and the children would move back at the sight of the officer whose wickedness had been described to them, and take refuge close to their mothers. In a word, everybody was scared, expecting recrimination, even strokes ...

Then, the so dreaded officer resolutely moved towards *the newcomers with a smile on his lips and an extended hand*, and, as though nothing had ever separated them, he stood in their midst and, adjusting his pace on theirs, he inquired about their health and their children.

Chapter XX : The Terrible' Rumi

For an initiated person, submission is an important event, particularly characterized by a solemn and imposing ceremony during which the defeated, tamed and mortified, would lay down their weapons and ammunition at the feet of their triumphant opponent. It is easy, then, to imagine officers proudly standing on their mettlesome horses, long lines of soldiers and auxiliaries with swords drawn and, before these legions, a procession of Berbers with sad looks, laying down their war attributes in a pile, one after the other. And, naturally to top it all, a sacrifice bull (*targuiba*) would then groan in a pool of blood in the middle of the assistance, attesting by its death that peace had come back among the humans. However, reality was always different and in most cases, nothing in the least happened that would remind people of that tradition. In the first place, a performance as dramatic as that was common practice only when it involved receiving the capitulation of a group or an important warlord whose prestige required having him go through a submission in public, aimed at marking the power of the French army before the eyes of the still reluctant unsubdued. And, in the Atlas mountains, people generally submitted only in small groups, and rarely had chiefs of caliber been received since authority was between the hands of a whole assembly in each tribe or fraction of a tribe. Besides, the sensitivity of the French was such that they loathed, except in cases of absolute political necessity, inflicting on an opponent who had succumbed arms in hands such a painful ceremony which obviously implied a certain element of humiliation. Therefore, one would tend to believe, knowing Captain Alain, that that morning at the Turgilal there was no troop deployment, and that no animal had been set apart from the skinny herds brought by the newly submitted Berbers.

Now, the Ait Ishaq notables had been gathered and asked to sit by the barbed wire of the north fortification, around Shawush Lahsen and El Hadj 'Ali who had submitted six months before under the conditions mentioned earlier. Shawush Lahsen showed them a canon and a machine gun, as well as the huge supplies available at the post. He even took a long time when they reached the ammunition depot where heaps of shells and hundreds of cartridge boxes were piled up. And, as they had to wait for the mountain men to be introduced to Captain Alain and the District Commander who had rushed there

as early as the evening before with aid supplies, the Shawush set about instructing the newly rallied men on *the code of the perfect submitted*.

The former dissidents listened to the auxiliary's delivery, but it was obvious that their minds were elsewhere. There were about fifteen of them, of all ages, each representing an important tribal group. They adopted a dignified attitude, showing no anxiety whatsoever. One could guess that they were eager to know about the conditions of their submission once and for all, but also that they had made up their minds to accept anything since the fateful hour had come. Besides, they had now been somewhat reassured by the words of the mokhaznis and goumiers whose meals they had been sharing ever since their arrival. They knew that no humiliating clause would be imposed on them. And, although they expected to be severely treated according to the laws of war, the shame that they had felt the day before, as they came down the slopes of Sidi 'Ali, was now completely gone. But they were dying to hear the Captain himself who, not long ago, was *that Christian dog or the cursed rumi*, and who now had become the hakem, that is the chief. A rather amusing detail was that some notables called the officer 'Ali, under the pretext that they could not pronounce Alain. But the pitiless Shawush actually suggested that this puerile berberisation of the name of the Christian, to whom they owed obedience, was calculated to give the illusion that they had submitted to one of their own countrymen, thus attenuating the bitterness of their situation.

However that may be, the moment set for the meeting had at last come and, upon the orderly's call, everybody proceeded to the sitting room of the bureau chief where the officers were standing. Then, each sat as he saw appropriate on the divans mentioned earlier, and the District Commander spoke. After welcoming the delegates, he asked them whether they had a chief who could speak on their behalf.

At those words, the bewildered notables looked at each other, and, after they had exchanged a few comments, an old man spoke for all of them:

- *We don't have a chief, we are a Djema'a. Each of us represents his own people and is alone qualified to speak and make commitments on their behalf. Still, you are the master...*

- *All right then. The Captain will communicate to you the conditions of your submission that you will be free to accept or refuse. Of course, those of you who are not pleased with the conditions will be taken back with their families to the front posts and will go back to dissidence land.*

- *We are the defeated and we will submit to everything you decide to impose to us.*

Then, Captain Alain took his turn to speak and, in a religious silence, he told the Berbers what their obligations would be:

You shall have to recognize the authority of France and that of the country's sultan in whose name we have undertaken to establish peace. You shall obey the officers' orders and our troops shall be allowed to go everywhere they please in your mountains. Your families and your religion shall be respected. Your houses and tents shall be inviolable, except in case house searches prove necessary following some offence or attack. You shall recover your own qsurs and fields, but each group shall be responsible for security in its housing district or transhumance area of which we shall tell you the limits. Any murder of a French soldier or of an auxiliary shall be punished by death. The same shall apply in case of complicity with the unsubdued and the dissidents that you shall be henceforth prohibited from receiving in your homes without authorization. You shall respect others' property and shall not kill each other any more, even for extinguishing a blood debt. You shall, in no case, take the law into your own hands. You shall be allowed to keep your weapons for the purpose of defending your families against the unsubdued, but a list of those weapons shall be drawn up by us as of today, and the Djema'a shall be responsible for their keeping and their presentation at any requisitioning by the authority. And, in order to avoid any confusion with the unsubdued looters and thieves, any person holding a weapon shall be provided with a special permit to be produced to any chief of detachment or patrol, on pain of final confiscation of the rifle or carbine and of a most serious sanction. In consideration of these conditions, you shall be admitted in all our markets and shall be allowed to move in total freedom all through your tribe's territory. Your brothers, who are presently in need, shall be able to immediately build up a little capital by bringing to the post chickens, eggs, wood, lime and plaster which will cost them only very little work and which shall be paid back to them on the spot for reasonable prices I myself shall fix. Contentious cases shall be immediately submitted to me, either in this office which shall be open day and night to all comers, or during my inspection rounds in your villages.

- *We do thank you. All this is wise and only for our benefit.*

- *Finally, your institutions and customs shall be respected as long as they are compatible with the order that we shall try to implement...*

- *We are immensely grateful to you for all this.*

- *However, the notables that you shall nominate to be members of the Djema'a shall need our approval so that we can dismiss from them, if need be, disorderly men. Moreover, as it be will imperative not to disturb the Djema'as at all moments for the daily business needs, they shall come to the office only once a week, during your suq day which we shall make a point to revive immediately. Still, each of your big fractions (khoms) shall nominate an amghar for all it duwars who will act as our representative and as intermediary between the assembly and the bureau. These are our conditions. Will those of you who are not pleased with them say so openly.*

In actual fact, Captain Alain, who knew that his address did not contain any excessive requirement, had not expected any protests. On the contrary, he firmly believed that those conditions would be accepted immediately and with enthusiasm. But, at his great amazement, and that of the District Commander, a whole minute, as long as a century, elapsed without the notables uttering a word. As though the last words they had heard had seemed strange to them, the Berbers whispered to each other things that could not be heard, and were rather long to respond.

Let us try, despite the mystery that surrounded the whispered words, to understand the cause behind their utter perplexity. For this purpose, let us try and find in their past as unsubdued indications likely to guide us.

In the first place, these men who had from time immemorial practiced an eye for an eye law were expecting to have much more drastic conditions imposed on them, and, from the beginning, envisaged the worst. That expected worst had, thanks to the marabouts' exaggerations which they intended to help them keep their clientele beside them in dissidence land, meant a confiscation of the best lands, a general disarming of the warriors, the enlistment of young people in our armies, hard labor on our roads and working sites, perhaps even a forced abduction of girls in the duwars for the organization of prostitution for the needs of our soldiers. On their side, the tribes' notables had been persuaded by the same marabouts that the Christian, who had not been pleased by the role of the Djema'as during the resistance era, had prepared Qaids foreign to the country to take over the leadership of the Berber groups. As to the tribe's prowlers, who had for three years shamelessly indulged in killing and robbing, they were so definite about their sad fate when they would arrive at the French post that only the least compromised among them had made up their minds to come back. The others were still in the mountain, waiting to

see how their comrades would be treated. Yet, none of those issues had been even lightly touched upon by the officer, and, as the notables could not even conceive that those very people who had held the mountain to exhaustion would be granted a total pardon, they anxiously wondered whether they had been told everything and whether there weren't any surprises in store for them the next day. All the more so since the Zayan who had submitted before the Dir tribes, as the delegates knew well, had to pay a substantial war fine. Also of importance in this respect was the fact that Captain Alain had been keeping an up-to-date and exact record, which everybody knew about, of all the murders, weapon thefts and abductions of animals perpetrated by the dissidents in the pacified zone, for purposes of future settlements...

Secondly, the institution of a representative of the Captain in each fraction was considered as a new type of measure to which the notables could not yet assign a precise meaning. If it meant nominating a mere intermediary, without any power or authority over the group, they did not think it was necessary to involve a notable as a simple *reqqas* designated in turn by the *duwars* was enough to transmit instructions and information, and the *Djema'a* would continue to exercise authority as in the past. If, on the contrary, it was a matter of nominating a real chief, a *Qaid* in plain words, then the issue was an important one, a serious one indeed, which could not be resolved without a meeting of the tent chiefs, without discussions and without drawing lots. For this was a position that had already cost Hamu U Melluk his life, because he had been too eager to occupy it, and which had led El Hadj 'Ali to betray his brothers and submit six months before the rest of the tribes. This was a position that was coveted by all the great personalities, and which had constituted a topic of heated discussion under the tents that night. It was proper then to ask the *hakem* for the necessary precisions.

Finally, the material issue, although the most important, had been equally omitted by the Captain. By submitting, the tribe had hoped that its poor material situation would quickly improve thanks to the French and, as a matter of fact, it had already benefited from large supplies and even clothing items. However, in spite of the victor's goodwill, it had limits. All the more so since the tents which had been completely ruined in dissidence now needed more than flour and sugar. They needed yokes for plowing, milk for the children and the old wool and goat hair for making tent flidjs and burnouses, as well as other things which generally could not be found in a bureau, at least not in sufficient quantities.

Yet, these issues had already been given due attention and the Djema'a had been unanimous to recognize that there was only one efficient remedy to the situation : war against the Ait Sukhman dissidents and those among the Dir tents that had remained with them,. There, in the Oued El 'Abid and even at the fringes of Ait Ishaq territory, which they all knew about as they had come from there, herds were numerous, the situations of the encampments were perfectly known and the smallest harka, if well-conducted and well-supplied with ammunition, would be able to restock all the qsurs of the area in cattle, thus allowing the groups to take shape again as a tribe and move to the summer pastures, which meant life again.

However, in spite of his declarations at Tamedjujt during the handover of Raho the prisoner, Captain Alain did not make any allusion to that war from which his new friends expected so much profit, and from which he himself, if he wanted to, could draw excellent political results.

We can then conclude that the Berbers' hesitations were amply justified. However, how could one explain them to the officers without giving them the impression that one was reluctant to make a firm decision, without making them angry? The Captain had a good knowledge of the Berber language, but he was a foreigner whose mentality differed from that of Imazighen and who, perhaps, had found it more appropriate to speak in a special way when he had to negotiate with them. Thus, as the French chiefs seemed to be losing patience, all the notables approached Shawush Lahsen in one move, surrounding him. Then, in a low voice, a very low voice indeed, and with their heads against each other, they confided to him the reasons for their anxiety, begging him to repeat to the Captain only words which he would consider sensible, as he was the one who knew. Of course, they made sure to touch the right chord by promising him a share, worthy of his courage, of the potential spoils of war.

- Do you realize, dear Lahsen, that thousands of sheep are penned in every night, hardly some distance from the post of Tisseli. Isn't it a shame for all of us to tolerate such an insult from the unsubdued? So, do try and convince the Captain to allow us to act, with you as our leader. We are certain that we will soon recover our losses without having resort to the bureaus' generosity. Of course, even if you don't come with us, we promise that you will be served first after every successful expedition...

- That's a familiar tune and that I am delighted to hear from you. I will, indeed, repeat to the Captain everything you have just told me. But, let's see

(the Shawush made the tone of his voice even lower). Weren't you calling me a renegade a few months ago because I fought against you? And, don't you think that the Muslims of Tifert would be justified in their turn to curse you if you 'ate' them?

- Heuchch ⁽¹⁾ Lahsen, you are so bad at choosing when to joke/ do you think this is time to joke? Why are you talking about this? And, what are these stories about renegade and Muslims of Tifert? There is nothing more real than a full pot. You said so yourself, and, we cannot go on dipping into your own pot.

- Oh! I never go back on what I say, particularly as far as this issue goes. Still, I am most delighted to see that we, at last, see eye to eye on this subject.

This said, the Shawush extricated himself with difficulty from the circle around him and transmitted to the District Commander and to the Captain the requests of the newly submitted. Then, having recovered their serenity, the officers reassured their worried audience:

- Concerning the conditions of your submission, you have already heard all of them and you will in no way have to submit to others subsequently. As far as we are concerned, the past is over and the blows that we have exchanged are a thing of the past. From now on, we will judge you only on your acts as submitted people and we do hope that you will deserve only compliments for them. As to the amghar to be nominated in each fraction, he will have full authority to police the region as appropriate for a representative of the makhzen. However, you will be able to nominate one only in eight days so that you can deliberate on the matter as you please. Today, all we need is to agree about the principle of this institution.

- Thank you! Thank you!

- Finally, the question concerning the Ait Sukhman herds is settled in advance. Not only will you be allowed to carry out razzias as you wish...

- May God preserve you...

- But our cavalry men will help you and we will provide weapons and cartridges, and ammunition as promised.

- You are a great man...

- However, no expedition shall be carried out without permission by the Bureau

- Yes! Yes!

- Only volunteers shall participate...

- That is understood. You have brought us an unparalleled joy and you may count on our utmost devotion and loyalty.

- So, we are going to carry out an inventory of your weapons and distribute a few bags of flour. Then, starting from this evening, you shall be able to go back to your qsurs. They do need repairing, but you will soon be able to put them in shape. We, on our side, will try to provide you with supplies of grain seeds and everything will be all right, if God wishes.

At these words, the Berbers rushed to shake the officers' hands effusively, also putting on a great show of friendship to Shawush Lahsen whose prestige had considerably grown thanks to his skill in making himself understood by his chiefs. Finally, they decided to join their families who must now be really impatient.

Only El Hadj 'Ali was sad because he expected to be nominated Qaid of the whole tribe, in spite of the opposition of the lately submitted group. He was not even sure, now, of remaining amghar of his fraction which had been seriously strengthened. However, he had no hard feelings. He had already harvested a great number of wheat fields that had been abandoned by the May runaway group and acquired, for a good price, some fine plots. And, within five months, his livestock had considerably grown thanks to the razzias carried out by his own brothers and his skillful organization. And he thought that, after all, he was far from being unfortunate.

As to the Shawush who had enlisted Taybi in the Makhzen, his only concern was to obtain, from his new friends among the submitted, a little discretion concerning their aggressive plans. For, in a closed mouth, no flies can enter, and opportunities for razzias had become too scarce to allow for them to be compromised by bragging.

That evening, the Ait Ishaq poured out into the whole region, looking for their horses or former camping sites, and their caravans swarmed in all directions, covering the whole flat land around the post.

And, while the district Commander and the Captain, leaning on elbows at one of the fortress bastions, rejoiced at this return of normal life and peace in the bled that had been through so many tragedies, the mokhaznis and goumiers, indifferent to politics, came to honor them with an ahydus.

And, slowly, a verse sounded in the air, which demonstrated all the viciousness of ineshadhen towards their former opponents who had come back from dissidence in a state of extreme emaciation:

Aoua ma degoun ijran a ouinna di 'aidhen
Aoua our degoun iqqim khas allen di mejjan
(Oh ! whatever happened to you, those who have just come back
you have only eyes and ears left)

Chapter XXI : Observations on the Berbers in the Past and Today

The Intellectuals

At the moment of concluding this book, I was caught by a qualm which compelled me to provide a few explanations concerning the Berber mentality. Because of the potential lack of familiarity of the readers with the people and the nature of things of this country, failure to take such a precaution holds the risk of misunderstanding of a number of behaviors and attitudes described in the preceding pages. In France, in particular, where some people of good faith are still amazed at the idea that Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan soldiers enthusiastically participate in the French conquest of people of their own race. People are likely to show a great surprise at seeing Berbers killing each other with so much cold blood, from one tribe to another and from one tribe to the newly submitted Ait Ishaq asking, as a great favor, to be allowed to fight against their war companions whom they had left hardly thirty six hours before. It is essential then, to recall that the events related here did take place under special circumstances and among different human beings. And, in order to achieve a closer and better understanding of the Berber reality, we must, as Pierre Mille⁽¹⁾ did, dismiss from our memory and our sensitivity, anything that may be implied in terms of preconceived ideas in the concepts of *democracy, patriotism and national solidarity*.

Borrowed from the eminent writer to get him to understand that he was wrong about the author's military origin. As a matter of fact, I did not originate from Saint-Cyr School, but from the rank and file. It is hoped that this necessary clarification will induce our readers to demonstrate more indulgence in so far as the author's modest writings are concerned.

Besides, it is the very history of the Berbers that will contribute to introducing us to the remote and deep causes of things that may disconcert us.

Indeed, here we have a people who have never really been masters of their own country. They live in one of the most fertile regions of the world, at the very gate of Europe, and thus, exposed to all kinds of covetous intentions and to all invasions. Their past is a long succession of sustained wars to preserve their independence. But, as already mentioned at the beginning of the present

(1) Au Maroc, Chez les Fils de l'Ombre et du Soleil (Firmin-Didot, editors, Paris).

book, the character of the people and their organization are such that, ever since the dawn of their history, they have never managed or even seriously thought about uniting against the invaders and opposing an efficient resistance to them. In actual fact, the tribes had so little conscience of their community of origin or had been so poorly preoccupied with it, and had even so often been enemy to each other, that they had, in isolation or in small groups, momentarily united through ephemeral alliances, consented to take up arms when their freedom or individual interests were directly at stake. Then, after complete defeat, they submitted to their victor's law and served him or took refuge in small groups in the inhospitable mountains where the French were the first to follow them.

And yet, if the defense of their rich land and plain pastures was not enough to unite all their energies towards a common effort, to create in the people a collective conscience and a real national spirit, life in harsh and sterile regions with a rigorous climate, with almost non-existent resources, could only promote an extreme selfishness and individualism among the tribes and their members.

This is because, having fought for freedom and honor, the groups had to deal with a more concrete and otherwise more harrowing and urgent problem that required a solution, that was the subsistence of families and herds which meant lasting far from the enemy and his yoke. Then, they would carry out intensive forest clearing, but the area thus conquered over forests and rocks could not help meet all needs. They did try to organise themselves, to set up alliances among refugees from a same independent mountain range for the purpose of defending and exploiting the common resources. But among the groups that had been formed on a neighboring basis, people lived according to a system of mutual protection, rather than one of effective moral solidarity. Not only did they lack a tie of natural affection and the power of a common past and historical heritage, but their members had so often confronted each other, before they were united through adversity, that their pacts did not last long. At the least conflict of interests, at the first blow to self-esteem, bitter memories got the upper hand and they soon came to blows, before the very eyes of the invader and to his greatest benefit.

No wonder then that the Berbers are indifferent to their brothers and that they demonstrate a cool cruelty in destroying each other.

They bear the burden of twenty centuries of ignorance, of divisions, of vain convulsions, and of foreign domination that has been indifferent to their development and their fate. They are now paying for their fanatical

individualism and their absolute lack of ideal, which has meant that, in spite of their language and religion that they share, in spite of the examples they have witnessed and the wars they have had to stand up to, they have not yet become aware of the need to unite. The incoherent nature of their past, the differences and geographical complexity of the mountain ranges that had served as refuges for them after the least storm, the oligarchic form of their constitution and the multiplicity of their governments weigh so heavily on them that they seem to have developed a moral system, loaded with selfishness and contradictory emotions, where no word from the European patriotic repertoire would hold its real meaning. In a word, we are not here dealing with a real people or a real nation with its own personality, but with a multitude of groups, foreign to each other and unable to make a substantial effort, long enough to defend their immediate material interests or to satisfy their craving for freedom and independence.

However, one should not conclude from this rather dark picture that the Berbers are incapable of making progress, nor that they are doomed to remaining a minority forever. On the contrary, everything seems to suggest that, wisely guided by well-informed educators and firmly resolved to work toward the achievement of a complete and durable work of development, these white men who are so similar to the European Mediterranean in all respects, will be learners most worthy of their masters in all domains. For, compared to the serious defects listed so far, they are able to demonstrate a variety of qualities such as love for their country, enthusiasm for work, a knack for saving, intelligence, courage, pride and finally all the virtues which have made them all the time worthy of esteem, in spite of all the defeats they have accumulated.

Moreover, all the past experiences attest to the fact that every time they have been in contact with a civilization, they have proved, in a striking way, how able they are to progress. And, if these experiences have eventually failed, it is because all their invaders, except the Arabs who brought their own religion, have been preoccupied mainly with conquering ports and plains to help their nationals settle in the country. Their concern for the elites whose contribution was essential for the safety of their establishments came only later, and they never considered pushing their conquest to the limits. Now, in our African countries, any conquest is short-lived if it does not reach centers of hostility where hatred for the dominating power and everything new it brings with it is likely to prevail. Any colonizing enterprise is doomed to failure which claims to develop in contact with a non-controlled anarchy and indifference or contempt towards the mass of natives. Sooner or later, a tidal wave occurs

which knocks down everything on its way and, of all the wonderful things that the country has been endowed with, only ruins often remain.

In any way, to come back to the hopes we have placed on the Berbers, a race which, in spite of the selfishness of antique civilizations, has been able to produce emperors and illustrious sultans as well as great thinkers and even saints, cannot be destined to die or vegetate forever in a state of barbarism or semi-tameness. And, the spectacle that we have before our eyes from East to West in North Africa does show what a humanitarian policy, which in fact is still in its early stages, is able to achieve.

Having learnt from the sterility of their past, the Berbers have now resolutely sat to work, in all domains of human activity, with the firm intention, at last, of coming out from the rut in which they have been stuck for centuries. The old spirit of independence that has so much tormented their ancestor's minds is now dead and has been replaced by a more conscious and more realistic patriotism which leads individuals not only to accommodate to the neighborhood of the foreigner, as in the past, but also to discern their safety and actually crave for it. They no more think about systematically criticizing the actions of their dominators, they rather try to understand and imitate them or to retain what is good in them. They no more content themselves with education, they also want to produce in order to stop living as parasites on society. University degrees, which in the past were enough for those who obtained them and who were eager to stand out in the midst of an illiterate mass or impress prebend dispensers, have value only in so far as they allow them to contribute in a useful way to public life.

People do not any more want to be scholars in the old fashion, that is visionaries, useless and towed, able at the most to occupy subordinate positions in the administration, they rather want to be, and they indeed are, doctors, veterinary surgeons, judges, lawyers, agricultural engineers, polytechnicians and administrators. And, the most enlightened among them have so well understood the causes of their ancestors' distress that their only concern has become to spare themselves the same plight by urging to go to school, not only the children of families with means, but all children of the people, including women, whose past generations had never thought about it. In a word, they now feel the need to unite, to progress, to achieve serious and conclusive things, and finally, to play, in the world, another role than being useless and wicked stooges, and become a people with experience. This is a need that has tyrannically obsessed the young Berber generations, as well as the young Arab generations of North Africa.

It is then up to France to act in such a way that this aptitude and this tendency to develop bear fruit and that the native values which are growing in number constitute an important factor in the power of the French, and that of the countries under French protection.

Are we in France conscious of the opportunities offered to us in this respect, and have we made up our minds to benefit from them? A definite answer to this question is yes and this opinion is borne by most serious arguments. Unfortunately, in matters relating to colonial liberalism and progress, it rarely happens that the understandable caution demonstrated by the colonizing nation triggers an equally understandable eagerness on the part of the colonized. And, as it is naturally the most educated among the natives who are the most eager in this respect, it is fair to state that they are the most miserable social class in North Africa.

The least we can say is that they are morally too isolated between their old who are totally separated from them, and the Europeans who are claimed, perhaps too exaggeratingly in certain circles, to be completely different from them, whatever they do. Besides, the isolation now extending to those who have been naturalized Frenchmen, which is utter nonsense, is likely to be carried to their graves, and even to their poor children.⁽¹⁾

Obviously, it is not my intention here to meddle in politics and, even if I were in a position to thoroughly deal with today's problems with the necessary competence, it is clear that I would be reluctant to do so in the context of these modest observations. However, this issue of the intellectuals and the naturalized is too much of a heavy burden on our daily relationships and common future to be completely ignored here. I, therefore, feel justified that the whole of our life has been devoted to the cause of fraternity between the French and the natives and that our hope is that everything should be done to put an end to the misunderstandings and mutual incomprehension which still prevail in this area. For, it will most certainly prove useless to display generous opinions nor even shower the illiterate or fanatical natives with kindness of all sorts, as long as the Europeans who live in daily contact with the literate native do not cease seeing in the latter, some budding Ghandi or a future communist, and the others a renegade and an enemy of Allah. This means that it is necessary, first and foremost, to clear the ground in North Africa off the

(1) In Tunisia, special cemeteries have been established for Muslims who have been naturalized French and whom the non-naturalized refuse to have in their own grave yards.

prejudices obstructing it, for, the solution of present and future political problems lies mainly in such precaution. It goes without saying here that in order to achieve this task, we should count mainly on the patriotic understanding of French people from all shades of political opinions whose sincere friendship is sought.

In this respect, it is essential that we know that the man who has done most harm to the French cause in this country is indisputably Charveriat who, by asserting forty years ago that hostility on the part of a native may be measured by his degree of French education. He has, thus, put, forever, the relationships between the French and the educated natives under the sign of reciprocal suspicion. Doubtless, this hideous aphorism that was put forward a few years after the organization of the native educational system, at a time when the wounds of the great Kabyle uprising had not yet healed, has found credence only among agitators of all races, who were also concerned about putting under such auspices their enterprise of hatred and discord. But, the colonial malaise never had any other cause than the intrigues of some handfuls of those who fished in troubled waters and, whatever a majority of the peoples concerned way think, the terrible penalty we have just recalled continues to break up at the root too many French and native friendships and affinities, which needs to be reiterated here.

I, therefore, sincerely hope that the dreadful atmosphere that has been created as a result of this hasty and unfair judgment will stop jeopardizing our policy in North Africa.

Words create states of mind Camillo Marabini wrote in his book The France-Italy Issue ⁽¹⁾, and this truth holds for all relationships between peoples. The first condition for fruitful collaboration is trust, but a full and reciprocal trust, one that prevails at all moments. And, this feeling is all the more essential that the world has somewhat lost its equilibrium, and that, as the future will go on smiling only on the most powerful, everything urges us to remain united.

I would like to finish this book with a wish that is inspired only by my attachment to the strong and proud people from whom I was born, and by my deep and definitive French feelings. No criticism is meant here as I know that a rather short century of contact, of which a fair share was spent fighting and observing each other, could hardly give us more than we have acquired from

(1) Les Editions Européennes, Paris

it. However, without meddling in a domain which is not mine, without being carried away by any pipe dream, without forgetting the respect due to our old generations, I should like to say that it is high time to give the native youth their due place in the French society. This is in order for it to develop in a healthy and honest way, and also in order to promote the greatness of our common homeland.

Lexicon

Abbreviations

- Ar. = Arabic word or of Arabic origin
B. = Berber word

- **A'sha (Ar.):** Last prayer of the day in Islam. It takes place either at the mosque or at home, about 21:00 hours.

- **Agjdur (B.):** A scene through which the Berber women show their affliction at someone's death. As soon as the dying person has breathed the last sigh, the women present rush out of the room or the funeral tent (among the nomads), and gather next to the housing place, screaming. Then, the close female relatives (mothers, wives, sisters) who have rolled in the mud or dust, as a sign of mourning, walk to and fro moaning, with their hands crossed behind their backs. In the meantime, the other women form a circle for the agjdur. The latter consists in scraping their jaws with their nails, in a top to bottom movement which follows the spasmodic rhythm on which the women endlessly repeat the phrase: *Ahi Ayayuahi (roughly, Oh! What misfortune has befallen me)*

Every dead person is entitled to at least one agejdur, even if the dead body has been left on the battlefield, or burnt by the enemy or else carried away by the waters. Besides, an agejdur is said all through the week following the death, every time a woman arrives to the house of the deceased to present her condolences to the family.

The number of women participating in the agejdur immediately following the death and its duration depend on the age of the deceased and the moral standing of his family in the group. In the case of important personalities, whose death affects a whole collectivity, the general character of mourning is further marked by pulling down all the tents of the collectivity for a few hours.

Agejdur is a very impressive spectacle that reminds, to some extent, of the hired mourners of ancient Europe.

- **Agurram (B.):** Illustrious religious personality. Examples: Sidi ‘Ali Amhawesh, Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi, etc.

- **Aguelman (B.):** Lake, pond.

- **Ahmil (B.):** guarantor- surety.

- **Ahydus (B.):** Berber dance accompanied with songs in which the men, holding tambourines (allun, plural alluthen), and the women stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. The dance master stands in the middle of the circle, acting as a conductor, with the privileged spectators. The dance master, who also holds a tambourine, adopts a standing position while the spectators are seated. Close to the circle, but standing outside it, are the ordinary spectators, on horseback or on their feet. Fires are lit on which the tambourines are warmed from time to time in order to increase their resonance.

The male and female dancers alternate in forming two clans, each with its own poets and bards called *inshadhen* (singular: *aneshadh*). Having selected a refrain in fashion, which is meant to initiate the rhythm, one of the bards improvises a verse and starts singing it. When the verse has been adopted, the two clans repeat it in turn, reiterating the refrain every time until the bard of the opposite clan has improvised a new one. In case a bard is unable to improvise a new verse, the dancers show their coldness by dropping the song and the poets then move to another one. Some *inshadhen* are both poets and accomplished historians. Their improvisations always deal with war, love, the notables’ failings and important political events. Thus, and given that the Berber language is not written, it is thanks to them alone that the history is perpetuated and they exert so much influence on public opinion that important personalities treat them with great consideration. Some notables even have their own bards who live in their own family circle with the only mission of attending all the celebrations in order to praise their friends’ merits.

The *inshadhen* most particularly excel at playing at sung riddles (*thikefrin*) where their improvisations are sometimes of a great skill.

There are no paid professional bards and each of them can, at any moment, stop a dance to get the attention of the audience. Some women also venture to say poetry, among them one by the name of ‘Aysha Tahra, now deceased, who won herself a great celebrity alongside ‘Ali U ‘Abba (Amahroq’s companion),

Muha U ‘Abdi and Muhamed U Lahsen, from the Ichqern region.

- **Ait (B.):** children of.

- **Ait 'ari (B.):** The children/people of the mountain (forest). The expression holds a pejorative connotation and is used to refer to mountain men of an inferior species.

- **Ait Ahmed U 'Ayssa:** Berber tribe of the Ishqern sub-confederation (about 500 families). Their main center is El Mers N Ait Hind, some 25 kilometers south west of El Qebab.

- **Ait 'Arfa:** Berber tribe of the Ait Mguild sub-confederation (about 2000 families). Its territory extends from the Muluya River to Azrou. One of its Muluya fractions rallied to the French in 1917 without putting up a fight. Then, it revolted in 1919 and submitted again two years later, when the French columns reappeared in the area.

- **Ait Bu Mzil:** Berber tribe of the Zayan sub-confederation. Its main center is Bumzil, 40 kilometers east of Khenifra. The tribe rallied as early as 1917, submitted in 1921 without fighting against the French, under the influence of Amahraq Uld Muha U Hamu, Khalifa of the Khenifra Pasha, who has relatives on his mother's side in that town.

- **Ait Izdeg:** A Berber tribe of the Ait Yafelman confederation, settled on both slopes of the High Atlas. Its main settling places are Midelt and Rish. They submitted without fight when the first French column arrived in the country, but they revolted in 1919 at the call of Sidi Belqacem Ngadi of Tafilalet. They, again submitted when important French strengths reappeared on their territory.

- **Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa:** Berber tribe of the Ichqern sub-confederation (About 600 families). Its main center is Tinteghallin, where its market is held. It was occupied by the Freydenberg column on 16, May 1922 after a rather tough fight in which the Imzinaten, the Ait Ahmed U 'Ayssa and a few Ait Ishaq took part. It was a warrior tribe to which a Christian origin was attributed. Its notables were considered as treacherous, but nothing in our relations with this submitted tribe attests to this.

- **Amahzun (B.):** Belonging to the Imahzan family of Muha U Hamu, former master of the Zayan region.

- **Aman (Ar.):** Safety granted to an enemy to go to the opponent side. Pardon granted to an enemy after cessation of hostilities.

- **Aman (B.):** Water

- **Amahroq (Uld Muha U Hamu Zayani):** Brother and Khalifa of the present Pasha of Khenifra.

- **Amazigh (B.):** Berber- Plural Imazighen.

- **Amghar (B.):** Literally old (man). Practically: a personality elected among a group to see to, on behalf of the group, observation of customs and good order. There is a permanent amghar for ordinary life in each group whose term lasts one year, and an occasional amghar for temporary missions (war, work tasks, etc.). The latter's powers end with the end of the mission assigned to him. (See La Montagne Berbere).

- **Anedhlib (B.):** Berber noun originating from the Arabic talaba (to ask). Describes the status of someone who is a blood creditor or debtor following a murder. The creditor's closest relative to the victim remains in his tribe while the debtor (criminal) has to leave it and come back only when the debt has been extinguished through another crime perpetrated by the creditor or one of his relatives. In Moroccan Berberland, a debt may be equally extinguished through pecuniary arrangement. (See La Montagne Berbere and the brilliant and fascinating study by Mr. Ferdinand Duchene: La Rekba, Collection Les Barbaresques)

- **Aqrab (B.):** Leather bag carried on the left side and attached with a chain-like cord, containing the warrior's ammunition and petty items that he carries with him (shoeing nails, thread and needles). It also serves as a wallet. It is an essential component of a man's equipment, and also for the child for whom models of a small size exist.

- **'Araba:** European noun of unknown origin. It is a two-wheel vehicle used, particularly, in the Army of Africa, for the transport equipment, food supplies and materials of all kinds. Usually harnessed to two or three mules.(Translator's note : This is an Arabic word, generally meaning 'vehicle' or cart)

- **Auxiliaire:** Native warrior specially recruited: goumier, mokhazni, partisan (see these words)

- **'Ayashi:** name given to the great Atlas mountain, located south of Midelt.

- **Baraka (Ar.):** Divine blessing. In practice, Europeans in Morocco (civilian and military) have twisted the real meaning of this word and for them to have the baraka is to be lucky.

- **Barud (Ar.):** *literally powder.* In current speech, it means a battle involving the use of fire arms.

- **Blaghis (Ar.):** leather slippers with soles, but no heel. Singular: a belgha.

- **Bu'azza:** (Uld Muha U Hamu Zayani): A young Berber chief, son of the

former Zayan chief. He first fought with his own people against us, then he rallied to our cause and rendered most important services to us as chief of the Zayan Makhzen District. He was killed while in service with us on 27 March, 1923, during the Taguzalt battle, near Alemsid. He was Knight of the Legion of Honour. (See the narration of his deeds and that of his death in *La Montagne Berbere*)

- **Bureau:** Implied Affaires Indigenes (Native Affairs). The Moroccan natives call bureau all the French authorities at any location in their country.

- **Burnous:** roomy garment with wide tails and a hood, made of wool, cloth or silk and that comes in different colours.

- **Cercle:** Control of command organ exercising authority over a variable number of Native Affairs Bureaus. (Bureaux des Affaires Indigènes)

- **Confederation (of a tribe):** Group of tribes having the same ethnic origin. For example: Ait Umalu, Ait Yafelman, etc.

- **Couscous:** One of the most essential meals of the natives, made of semolina converted into tiny grains and steam-cooked. Meat or milk stock (ta'am), or sugar or cinamon (seffa) are added to the couscous.

- **Coutume:** Set of customs and conventions which govern the relationships between Berber individuals and groups in areas where religious prescriptions are not followed. Berbers observe a holy respect for their customs and are very much attached to them.

- **Dir (Ar.):** literally chest (part of the body). Used to refer to the northern side of the Middle Atlas mountain chain, everywhere it overhangs on the plain. Example: from Beni-Mellal to Kerushen.

- **Dissident:** An individual who has not yet submitted, belonging to a tribe which has already rallied to the French.

- **Djebel (Ar.):** Mountain (chain), massif.

- **Djellaba (Ar.):** Wool or cloth garment, with wide sleeves and a hood, generally open in the front from neck to belt.

- **Djema'a:** Group of notables entitled, because of their age and their qualities, to manage their group's affairs, under the people's control. (See *La Montagne Berbere*)

- **Djenn (Ar.):** Plural *djenun*: spirits.

- **Duwar (Ar.):** Group of tents set in a circle. The smallest social organizational subdivision among the Berbers (*Thiguemmi in Berber*).

- **Qebbab**: Big village, political center and market of Imzintan, 30 kilometers south of Khenifra.

- **Fassi (Ar.)**: Plural: fassis. Inhabitant of Fez or originating from this city.

- **Fantasia (Ar.)**: Most certainly related to the French word *fantaisie*, referring to the powder game. In Berber: *Thafraout* Plural: *Thiferwin*. Ten to twenty horsemen in a line first raise their blank-loaded rifles to the sky. Then, at a signal by the group chief, they proceed in a full trot, squeezed against each other and in a simple line. Having thus covered about one hundred meters, with their rifles high, they break into a gallop, covering 100 to 150 meters in a straight line at full speed. Then, upon a new signal, they raise their rifles and start again behind the other groups.

This is a game that is highly valued by the natives, most particularly in the Dir. They practice it on all the great occasions, and most particularly in order to honor an important guest. In the latter case, it is customary that the salvos and the horsemen's stopping take place in front of the tent receiving the most important personality. The skill of the horsemen consists in being well-aligned during the race and performing all the gestures at the same time and in full harmony.

- **Fatiha (Ar.)**: Brief prayer, not involving the usual genuflexions. It is said by a group of people to conclude a discussion following some pact or agreement.

- **Fraction**: Subdivision above the duwar in the Berber social organization. Generally, a tribe is made up of four or five fractions, with each fraction containing five to ten duwars.

- **Gandurah (Ar.)**: Light and wide garment, with sleeves made of rough or thin cloth, open in the front, down to the chest, or fastened.

- **Guersh (Ar.)**: Old Moroccan silver coin worth about 0.25 Franc, according to the exchange rate.

- **Guish (Ar.)**: Formerly, a tribe or group at the personal service of the Sultan. Presently, an auxiliary troop, recruited and employed under the same conditions as the Makhzen (See Makhzen).

- **Goum (Ar.)**: Moroccan auxiliary troop, supplied with French and native manpower, recruited through enlistment and voluntary re-enlistment for six months, one year or two years. Goumiers are generally recruited in the area in which they serve. They may be married and live with their families. Units are

commanded by chiefs of Bureaux Indigènes (Native bureaus) and mainly used for policing duties within the tribes.

- **Hakem (Ar.):** The chief, the holder of authority in an organized region. Used mainly to refer to French officers of the Native Affairs Department.

- **Harka (Ar.):** A small army of more than fifty warriors. A gang.

- **Hassani (Ar.)(Moroccan) :** Anything related to the reign of Sultan Moulay Hassan. Moroccan silver coin worth about 50 centimes, according to the exchange rate. With a pejorative connotation, it refers to anything that is badly done or badly considered.

- **Ichqern:** Sub-confederation of Ait Umalu, made up of three tribes: Ait Ya'qub U 'Ayssa, Ait Ahmed U 'Ayssa and Imzinated.

- **Ighrem (B.):** Plural: Igherman. Dwelling houses surrounded by a common walled enclosure, village.

- **Igurramen (B.):** Singular: agurram : illustrious religious personality.

- **Iguezdu (B.):** Camp including a number of duwars.

- **Im'azzan (B.):** Singular Im'azzi. Person presenting condolences to the family of a deceased person.

- **Imazighen (B.):** Singular Amazigh. Name used to refer to the Berbers.

- **Imgharen (B.):** Plural of Amghar (See Amghar)

- **Imghughen (B.):** Singular Amghugh : Dissident, unsubmitted.

- **Imsubren (B.):** Singular Amsuber: Submitted (pejorative)

- **Imzinated (B.):** One of the three tribes of the Ichqern sub-confederation. Its center is El Qebab (about 1000 families)

- **Ineshadhen (B.):** Singular Anshad: Bard (see ahydus)

- **Irebba'an (B.):** Singular Arebba'. Agricultural associate for one quarter (of the crop in market gardening and maize)

- **Ireqqassen (B.):** Singular Areqqas : messenger, informer.

- **Izar (Ar.):** Outer wide and light garment, worn by Berber and Arab women indoors.

- **Leff (B.):** Political party, clan.

- **Kerushen:** Ait Ihand market, 30 kilometers east of El Qebbab.

- **Khammas (Ar.):** Agricultural associate for one fifth (of the crop)

- **Kheyma (Ar.):** Black Arab or Berber tent.
- **Khira (Ar.):** Female Arabic name.
- **Kutshi :** Distorted form of the French cocher (coachman). Horse driven vehicle.
- **Makhzen (Ar.):** The word has either of two meanings: 1. Sherifian Government and 2. Moroccan auxiliary troop similar to the goum. (see goum), the difference being that mokhaznis do not enlist or re-enlist on a contract basis for a specific period.
- **Meshwi (Ar.):** Whole or part of a sheep or a goat spit and grilled in an oven or on the embers of a fire.
- **Mokhazni** (see Makhzen)
- **Muludi:** Name of an Arab merchant of El Qebab.
- **Muluya:** One of the most important rivers in Morocco. Has its spring south of Alemsid and flows into the Mediterranean.
- **War eddin (B.):** Without religion, impious.
- **Oued (Ar.):** River (Berber: Assif)
- **Oued Seru:** Affluent of Um Er Rebi', has its source east of Kerushen and flows through the Ishqern region and Ait Ishaq from east to West.
- **Partisan:** Moroccan horseman or pedestrian, recruited temporarily for a mission.
- **Petesa:** Old Moroccan silver coin worth about 1.25 Franc according to the exchange rate.
- **Qaid:** tribal chief, appointed by his Majesty the Sultan upon nomination by the French authorities and the central Makhzen.
- **Qa'ida (Ar.):** set of customs and norms prevailing in the country, protocol.
- **Qissaria (Ar.):** Groups of shops set together in a town for trading in cotton cloth, silk, and other luxury goods.
- **Qsurs (Ar.):** Singular: qsar. Arabic name for the Berber Ighrem (see Ighrem)
- **Qubba (Ar.):** dome
- **Ramadhan:** Annual fasting period which lasts for a month and during which Muslims abstain from eating, drinking and smoking all day long. The same applies to sexual relationships with women.

- **Razzia (Ar.):** Attack against an adversary, carried out to capture the enemy's herds and other property.

- **Rodeurs:** Armed unsubdued or dissidents, coming to a pacified zone, alone or in groups of five to ten individuals, to carry out raids on isolated individuals or housing areas.

- **Rogui (Ar.):** Warlord who formerly led a more or less numerous army with the purpose of seizing power (Morocco)

- **Saheb (Ar.):** friend, companion, servant.

- **Salopard:** Term used by the French soldiers to refer to the unsubdued and Moroccan dissidents, implies a certain degree of indulgence.

- **Rumi (Ar.):** Name used by the Arabs and Berbers to refer to a European, originates from the Roman occupation.

- **Seguia (Ar.):** Canalization dug in the ground for the irrigation of fields.

- **Shawush (Ar.):** chief of a group of mokhaznis attached to the bureau; platoon, native usherer to the bureau.

- **Shahada: (Ar.):** Muslim's pledge to the unity of God. It consists in raising the right index upwards (shahada) towards the sky and at the same time pronouncing the holy formula: La ilaha illa llah Muhammadun Rasulu llah (There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet)

- **Shiouxhs (Ar.):** singular: sheikh. Fraction chiefs; in the makhzenian hierarchy, the sheikh is the immediate subordinate to the Qaid when there is no khalifa (assistant) to the latter (assistant, second).

- **Shorfas (Ar.):** Singular sherif. Direct descendant of the Prophet

- **Shouaris:** two baskets made of woven dwarf palm-tree linked by a large band. They are used for donkey, mule or horse transport.

- **Siassa (Ar.):** Politics based on persuasion.

- **Sidi Muhamed Ben Taybi:** Son of Sidi Taybi Derqawi, influential religious personality in the region under study. He tried to take over political power in the unsubdued areas, but failed because he never really made up his mind to actually lead the warriors into battle. He died in 1932 and is buried at Agenfu in the Atlas.

- **Slougui (Ar.):** greyhound

- **Taddart n ludhu (B.):** Ablution room (toilets)

- **Tadha (B.):** Ally.(See La Montagne Berbere)

- **Tadjer (Ar.):** Literally : trader, merchant. Practically : term used by the natives to refer to the European settlers.

- **Taman melwit (B.):** Ridge separating the Muluya basin from that of Seru, south of Kerushen.

- **Tameghrust (B.):** Sheep or goat destined for sacrifice.

- **Tan'imalt (B.):** jinx.

- **Tareqqast (B.):** Hill dominating a neighboring area and generally serving as an observation post.

- **Taskert (B.):** Arab group settled in Berberland, North of El Qebab, claiming to be composed solely of Shorfas.

- **Tghesht (B):** Ewe that leads a herd, serving both as guide and leader.

- **Thidjal (B.):** Singular thadjalt: widow or divorced non-remarried woman.

- **Thifsa (B.):** Spring

- **Thimithar (B.):** Singular thamathart: password, recognition signal

- **Tibubalin (B):** Singular tabubalt: An ear that grows on fennel stems, believed to have aphrodisiac properties.

- **Tizi n Gheshu:** Pass linking the Muluya regions with Oued Seru, South of Kerushen.

- **Uled I Khawa:** Arabic tribe of the Muluya region, submitted without fight, then rose up in 1919 upon the call of an agitator. Then, it rallied again when important French troops reappeared in the area

- **Zawyia des Ait Ishaq:** Large Berber village, situated some 25 kilometers South-West of Khenifra. The main center and market place of Ait Ishaq, it contains a mosque dating back to about 250 years, but despite all the care taken since the occupation, only some remains have been preserved.

- **Zellidj (Ar.):** Mosaic tiles

- **Zeriba (Ar.):** Enclosure to protect tents from night thieves and prowlers, also a pen.

- **Zineb (Ar.):** Arabic female name.

